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2 November 1893.









# IN THE VINEYARD:

## A PLEA FOR CHRISTIAN WORK.

BY

*Enoch J. Fish*

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IN AMHERST COLLEGE.

"Go, work to-day in my vineyard."



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**To H. A. B.,**

**MY EARLIEST, LATEST, AND GREATEST**

**HUMAN HELPER IN THE VINEYARD,**

**This Volume**

**IS DEDICATED WITHOUT PERMISSION.**



## PREFACE.

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THE attention of believers is being drawn to the matter of CHRISTIAN WORK as never before since the days of the apostles. It is high time. Nineteen centuries of our era have nearly gone, and yet the greater part of the world is lying in almost utter ignorance of the gospel ; and even in so-called Christian countries, most of the people are in an unconverted and perishing state. What a clarion-summons in such facts ! Is it being sufficiently heeded ? With all the gain lately made (and that it is very great let us joyfully confess), it is still true, that most professing Christians, even of those not unexemplary in other respects, are doing very little to spread the religion they accept. Only by courtesy can they be called *laborers* in the vineyard. They are not even in the market-place, waiting for work. The Master is not yet done saying, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few : pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest."

The aim of this volume is altogether practical. It seeks to promote that active effort in the cause of Christ which his law requires, and which the needs of a world in large part still lying in wickedness beg for with most affecting importunity, but which is still so insufficiently granted. And this end is sought, *first*, by the persuasion of illustrious examples, and, *secondly*, by such appeals, as, without a show of argument, but with all its substance, may present in an orderly and vivid manner the leading principles, methods, and rewards of work in the Vineyard.

LYME, CONN.

# CONTENTS.

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## Part First.

### WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.

	PAGE.
I. GOD GLORIFYING HIMSELF . . . . .	11
II. JESUS DOING HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS . . . . .	23
III. APOSTLES WORKING BY PREACHING . . . . .	37
IV. A WORKING MINISTRY AND COUNTER-WORKING SATAN . . . . .	59
V. LAY-HELPERS AT PHILIPPI . . . . .	77
VI. MARY DOING WHAT SHE COULD . . . . .	95
VII. IMPERSONAL WORKERS . . . . .	113

---

## Part Second.

### WORK IN THE VINEYARD.

I. MUTUAL DEPENDENCE . . . . .	131
II. LIVING IN VAIN . . . . .	145
III. LIVING TO MINISTER . . . . .	159

	PAGE.
IV. OBSTACLES . . . . .	173
V. ORDER OF CHRISTIAN WORK . . . . .	189
VI. STANDING UP FOR JESUS . . . . .	203
VII. BREAKING THE ALABASTER BOX . . . . .	219
VIII. FORBIDDEN FIELDS . . . . .	239
IX. TIMES TO KEEP SILENCE . . . . .	251
X. SEND BY WHOM THOU WILT SEND . . . . .	267
XI. AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER . . . . .	289
XII. THE IDEAL FAMILY, PARISH, NATION . . . . .	305
XIII. LOOK TO YOUR OWN FAMILY . . . . .	323
XIV. CARE FOR THE IRRELIGIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD . . . . .	339
XV. PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD IN THE PARISH . . . . .	357
XVI. HELP YOUR COUNTRY . . . . .	371
XVII. BY HELPING FOREIGN COUNTRIES . . . . .	387
XVIII. ORGANIZATIONS FOR HELPING . . . . .	407
XIX. THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN GIVING . . . . .	421
XX. WAGES FOR WORK . . . . .	439

**Part First.**

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**WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

**I.**

**GOD.**



## **I. GOD GLORIFYING HIMSELF.**

## GOD GLORIFYING HIMSELF.

**I**T is not necessary for me to be famous. Though men should never hear of me, or, hearing of me, should think very slightly of my talents, my knowledge, my character, no harm might come of it. Indeed, it might be far better so than otherwise.

But it *is* necessary that God have a great name. Fame must take up her trumpet, and blow of Him to the four winds; strange tongues must speak His name and attributes in many countries and worlds; He must seem, far and wide in His dominions, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders — else extensive mischief will result.

Wherever God is not known, there is no virtue. Wherever He is conceived of as a stock, or as altogether such an one as ourselves; wherever He is seldom called to mind, or, when called to mind, excites no sense of admiration and awe — there is no virtue. But let a glorious view of Him occupy the mind, and sin is always restrained and often

broken ; holiness always encouraged, and sometimes almost perfected : in fact, wherever you find a man to whom God as a whole, in all the main elements of His person and government, seems the very lovely and august being that He is, there you find a happy, holy, useful, saved man. But the tendency is the same though only a single Divine attribute is kindled up into glory before us. The dazzle quickens conscience as the bright daylight streaming in upon him through the window disturbs the sleeper. All good influences in the soul are revitalized by the kindly splendor. Duty becomes more imperative. The service and friendship of God look more august and desirable. No doubt glorifying God is the great work to be done in the Vineyard.

And the agents for doing this work ? The mute stars that shine and wheel across the vault of evening can glorify their Maker : so can the herb of the field that so mysteriously grows and blossoms and enamels the landscape ; the eagle fleetly sailing among the clouds ; the lion shaking jungle and mountain with his kingly voice ; still better, man with his body "fearfully and wonderfully made," and spirit still more fearful and wonderful with its sublime faculty of knowledge and virtue. But, of all means of glorifying God, God Himself is the chief.

An almighty being can cause Himself to shine like a sun to the eye of every intelligent creature ; and it is incredible, that He cannot consistently reveal, beyond all other beings, His wonderful perfections. He does so. All along the ages, from the time when His voice was heard in the garden, He made Himself illustrious by audible heavenly voices, by the inspiration of prophets, by personal apparitions, by pillars of fire and cloud, by Shekinahs and oracles of Urim and Thummim, by almost innumerable miracles, by the august descent on Sinai, by the still more august incarnation in Jesus Christ who for thirty-three years proclaimed and revealed Him in doctrine and example, in life and death, beyond all things else. Then, by direct inspiration, He put on record the marvellous story with its fitting setting of doctrine and precept ; and sent out the Book, by sabbaths and sanctuaries and preachers, to speak of Him to all nations and ages as never Nature has been able to speak. And now He is personally at work as a Providence — answering prayers, fulfilling prophecies, making “all things work together for good to them who love God,” working all things after the counsel of His own will, making even the wrath of man to praise Him, smiting sparks of glory to Himself out of

the hardest flints of error and sin: in a word, shaping to His own glory whatsoever comes to pass, not by fits and starts, but by a steady activity that embraces and dominates and carries forward to its own end all secondary causes, as the Gulf Stream does the straws on its bosom. And there is a yet brighter and larger form of this Divine work. As Holy Ghost — directly enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying men — God does wonderfully more to manifest and magnify Himself in the thoughts of men than is done by the shining stars, or the still more shining Scriptures. He seems to none real and beautiful and glorious till they have been born of the Spirit. Then He shines out as the sun; then only is He loved. In all the range of Nature and Revelation there is no such manifestor of God as the new birth. Holiness is itself a revelation. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The Holy Ghost is our great confidence for filling the world with a sense of the Divine glory. Doubtless there is no worker in the Vineyard like God. He works behind a veil; but the pulsations in that veil are such as can only come from the immense movements behind it of a Force that has no fellow in all the range of Nature. It will be found, at last,

to have overruled the worst men, and the most intractable things, to the glory of His great name.

Sometimes we see no present tokens of such result. On the contrary, it often seems as if the reputation of God were actually suffering from passing events. It may really suffer for a time, and with here and there a person. But this is all explained by taking into view the principles on which God is wont to conduct His work. He is in no haste to harvest results. An eternal being can afford to count a thousand years as one day. He works by general laws of amazing breadth and complexity — sometimes so broad and complex that no human mind, with its narrow horizon and easily confused view, can determine from mere observation what is the value and direction of the resultant force, although developed immediately. In such a system, we cannot reasonably expect to *see* God glorified by any considerable part of things and events, though it be true that absolutely not an individual of them fails to be so managed by the all-grasping Providence as to minister to His glory at last.

Nor let us think that such a self-aggrandizing policy would sink God to the level of a human

ambition. There is no selfishness in God's plan to make all things honor Himself. He plans it from pure benevolence. The universe needs to see Him as He is, and see Him in a glorious light, that it may be drawn to fear, love, and serve Him, and so attain its highest condition of virtue and happiness. This is the worthy secret of His ambition — if ambition you choose to call it. He is blameless, though it be true that His plan contemplates, and His government will make sure, that every single thing through the whole wide field of being shall in the end, and in one form or another, do something to glorify God.

“Father, glorify Thy name.” As if Jesus had said, “It will be a dreadful fate to go to yonder cross, and bear thereon the sins of all mankind. Both flesh and spirit shrink from such unheard-of sacrifice. The great blood-drops, at the bare thought, trickle down my marred features to the ground. Still Thy will be done. If Thou canst better show forth Thy glory — show how great and holy and just and loving and inflexible in all right ways Thou art, how worthy to be feared and loved and served — then let me die. Pour out the curse upon me, and spare not. At whatever expense of present anguish to me, glorify Thy name.”

In using such language, the Saviour implied that it was a matter of *exceeding consequence* that God should appear glorious in the eyes of His creatures. It was of so much consequence, that the agonies of an atoning death were not too great a price to pay for it. Jesus fully comprehended what it would be to hang, nail-transfixed, to the cross; and to have the heaven of love turn black as midnight above Him, and cast into His bosom the avenging fires that fitly express the mighty guilt of men; but it seems such was His view of the need of having God glorified, that, for the sake of it, even this enormous atonement was willingly assumed.

And now I see clearly that it belongs to the Christian spirit both to pray earnestly for the diffusion of the Divine glory, and to seek that diffusion at whatever present expense to ourselves. The general welfare of the Christian can never come into conflict with the interests of God. But it often happens that his present ease and comfort cannot be reconciled with the best honor of the Heavenly Father. In short, it is the case of Jesus. He found that His Father could not be best honored save by the setting-up of the dreadful cross. So His disciples now find, that, to best promote the Divine glory, it is necessary for them to take up



temporary crosses. The heathen must be evangelized; and so one and another must make the painful sacrifice of leaving friends and civilization to carry to them the Gospel. The cause of truth and righteousness at home must be maintained and advanced; which, however, cannot be done, unless we make very considerable sacrifices of time and money and labor for the purpose. In such cases, we see what it is Christian to do. Christ sets us an example. "What a pain, what a ruinous black night of storms,—is this Calvary! But let it come, if it is the necessary price of the Divine glory. Father, glorify Thy name!" This is imitable conduct. It has often been imitated by devout men. Though it is not possible for human nature, and therefore no duty of ours, to be willing to sacrifice our happiness for an immortality for any object whatever; yet our convenience and comfort for a time we can freely part with for the sake of a suitable advantage. Such an advantage is the honor of our Father in Heaven. No inconveniences and discomforts that we can be called on to endure weigh any thing as an offset to the glory of the Supreme Being. Did we love Him after Christ's manner we could readily consent to bear heavy crosses for the sake of His great name.

The man who finds himself unwilling to make *any* sacrifice for the advance of God's kingdom—neither willing to spend time which he can use in this world's business, nor to contribute substance to the amount of some appreciable part of his income, nor to trespass on his ease and convenience in any way of direct Christian labor—whoever finds this to be his habit, let him anxiously ask whose disciple he is. Christ's? Is that possible? There must be something of Christ's regard for the Divine honor in every real follower of His. He must be willing to glorify God at some cost to flesh and blood. Christ will own him if he does not come up to Christ's own measure of self-sacrifice; but the man must be fairly started on the same path with his Master. His current problem and effort must be to grow up into Christ in all things—in *this* thing of choosing to have the Divine glory secured, though at the cost of some heavy outlay to himself. The Christian has solemnly agreed to this in agreeing to submit himself unconditionally to the whole will of God.



# **WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

## **II.**

### **JESUS.**

## **II. JESUS DOING HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS.**

## JESUS DOING HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS.

THE parents of Jesus found Him sitting in the temple, among scribes and doctors of the law, hearing and asking questions. In the modest way suitable to His age, He was really engaged in religiously teaching the religious teachers of the time, and all such as gathered about to listen to the novel conversation. It was direct personal labor for the cause of religion. It was going out into the weedy and decayed Vineyard of the world's spiritual interests, and beginning tillage. This was what Jesus meant when He spoke of being about His Father's business — *direct personal labor to build up the kingdom of God in the world.* There is no other form of work which so well deserves to be called God's work as this. It stands among other useful labors as man does among the other creatures of the world, or as the vessels of gold and silver in the house of a prince do to the vessels of clay. All have their use, and each could ill dispense with the others. But there are degrees

of worth and honor; and as man stands prince among the brutes, so stands direct religious labor for the cause of God in the world among purely secular labors, so stood the teaching and miracles and atonement of Jesus among the carpentry and other worldly labor of His youth.

Jesus in saying to His parents, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business, affirmed, not only that this direct religious labor belonged to His mission in the world, but that there was a kind of *necessity* of His performing it. In fact, He had left heaven on purpose to do this business. It had been from eternity a matter of express covenant between Him and the Father that He should do it. The Father, as the formal superior in the work of redemption, had laid Him, in regard to it, under the pressure of express command. The intrinsic nature of the work itself, as being most sacred, noble, needed, and one which He was every way fitted to perform, had laid Him under a necessity of conscience. He was pressed by a still further necessity — the necessity of affection. He loved the kingdom of God, He loved the souls of men, He loved direct labor in their behalf; and so His heart said *must* to Him when He thought of His Father's business. What a beautiful and glorious necessity! A many-

handed obligation held Him fast to His work. So the planet is held to the center of gravity of the system by scores of planetary and solar forces acting from that point with mighty invisible hands.

It seems, too, that this necessity for Christ's engaging in direct religious efforts on the outlying world of wickedness did not wait for gray hairs or even ripe manhood, before constituting itself. Here it is pressing heavily on a mere child of twelve years. "What, be about the Father's business so young! the body not yet compacted into strength, the mind yet comparatively unfledged and tottering, experience with scarcely more than time to titlepage her record: would it not be better to wait a while?" — "No, it is time to begin now. My very childhood must go forth into the field. Twelve years can do something; and, what they can do, they are bound to do. To do for God and righteousness is necessary for my human nature as an education, and for both human and divine natures as a happiness, a privilege, a glory. My career among men will be short; and, though it were to last a hundred years, all the time could profitably be used in such a work. So, upbraiding parents, I must be about my Father's business thus early." In this way Mary, who "laid up all these



things" in her heart, may be supposed, at last, to have interpreted the words of her Son. At all events, here He is consciously sent out into the field of direct religious labor for others, at an age when most persons, if they are concerned with benevolent labor at all, content themselves with receiving it.

I find in God a great business-doer. His work has been planned, and divided among Himself and a great number of other agents whom He has distinctly called to His service. I speak not now of that vast field of His affairs where earthly science makes its explorations, but of that other vast field which relates to the progress of His moral kingdom among men. He works on this Himself — continuously, zealously, and everlastingly. He employs the holy angels. He sets to the task the mechanical and other blind forces of the world. Every human being is also called on to do a part of the work suited to his place and faculty. On some part of the building that is going up each must stand and build. With hammer, or with plane, or with saw, or with straining shoulder; on foundation, or battlement, or turret, or gate; according to the fitting of nature and education, must you, whoever you are, take your place and

build for God. You may not do this work by a substitute ; for every one has his own task. The minister of religion has his task ; and elder or officer of whatever name, has his ; and the private Christian has his — all to be carried on together. To him who asks, " Why stand ye here all the day idle ? " idlers cannot say, " Because no man has hired us. " God has bespoken us, every one, on great and sure wages, for His Vineyard. Brother, a portion of the cause of Christ is given to you in trust. Friend, you can do something to honor God, whatever your situation ; and you have received appointment to do it. Neighbor, to help the souls of men to the grace of God that bringeth salvation was Christ's mission, and it is yours ; God having given it to you in charge, in my hearing, as in the hearing of all who can find voices and trumpets and thunders in the silent Bible. Acquaintance, whatsoever your hand finds to do for the interest of religion around you, (and who will dare claim that he finds nothing of this sort needing doing in this apostate world) do it with your might, as the work God has sent you to do and a part of His great business — the work you were born to do, and have been preserved to do, and, perhaps, have been converted to do. As truly as Jesus was put in charge

of business belonging to His Father, meaning direct action for the promotion of religion in the world, so truly is the same sacred deposit made with every person who has lips to pray and hands to work, and feet to carry the praying lips and working hands to the doors of sinful men.

And let us all feel that we *must* be about our Father's business. Let love constrain us. Goodness and God have claims on our hearts : let our hearts honor these claims by actively glorifying the sending Father and the saving Son. The necessity of conscience is upon us. It is a matter of intrinsic and eternal righteousness that we stand up for religion in the world in the forms of direct labor, speaking for it where speaking is best, giving for it where giving is best, sacrificing (so men speak) for it time and repose when such sacrificing is best, praying and exemplifying for it always as always is best. In all these ways we can do for the cause of Christ ; and in all these ways we are bound to do. Where is the man without his measure, great or small, both of faculty and of opportunity, for performing direct religious labor for God ? Where is the man who is not pressed to it by the forces of positive Divine command, often repeated and emphatically spoken ? " Son, go work to-day in my

Vineyard," is the alarm-bell that heaven sets pealing at our pillows at every dawn. The loud summoning music is in every ear, though some, by long neglect, have learned to sleep through its commanding vibrations. Some of us have made promises to God that we will be workmen for Him. At some time of threatened or threatening sickness, in some crisis of danger or faithful appeals, most have promised themselves to a Christian life with all its belongings ; and every professing believer has gone further, and hung up his engrossed covenant in the sanctuary for heaven and earth to read, to the effect, that, God helping, he will honestly endeavor to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless — not ignorant, surely, that it is written, "Go work to-day in my Vineyard." He has upon him the *must* of a solemn engagement. Jesus Himself was not more firmly bound to His supreme share of the Father's business. He felt His obligations sufficiently : we, alas ! feel ours too little, or not at all. What account made Samson of the seven green withes when his strength was up ? What account make we of our seven *musts* toward God's Vineyard when our carnal and world-seeking hearts start up like giants refreshed with wine ? But grace can reknit the broken fibers into

strength, and make the new man within us strong to rule and shred away the old. Jesus held to His obligations; apostles and fathers held to theirs; and by grace of watching and praying and sweating bare arms, we may hold to ours.

It is not more surely true that all men are bound to go about the Father's business than it is that they are bound to go about it *early in life*. There are modest ways in which mere childhood can work to good purpose in the vineyard. I believe in Ministering Children, in their possibility and reality. If they do not now stand in temples, and teach the doctors of the law, they do now sometimes pray with fervor and faith, "Thy kingdom come;" do now sometimes utter to parents and companions the simple truth with which goes the converting grace of God; do now sometimes, in true Christian spirit, build "Morning Stars," and sustain mission schools. In all ages, even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, God has perfected praise; out of their hands also, as useful workers in His Vineyard; has done it so often, and in so many ways, that if any child of twelve years should say to me, "Wist thou not that I must be about my Father's business?" I should say to him, "I know it. You are not too young to be engaged in doing good. Your

young tongue and hands are welcome and wanted in the Vineyard. There is work of all sorts for all ages ; and tiny fingers such as yours can glean and weed after the strong men who plow and mow and dig. You can say, 'Father, why are you not a Christian?' You can ask your playmate to the church and the Sunday school. You can carry the little tract that tells of Jesus. With a simple heart, you can, perhaps, like children of old, sing hosanna to Him Most Blessed, who cometh in the name of the Lord. Above all, you can pray like a king, 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.' " So, O child, it is true that you are bound to be about your Father's business. And as to parents, instead of repeating the part of Joseph and Mary, they should consider it a part of that nurture and admonition in the Lord in which they are required to train up their children, to accustom them betimes to every kind of benevolent activity, and especially to that which points at the morals and souls of men. Let them be formed early to a taste for such things, let them be drilled to a rooted habit and prompt facility in them ; and what great things will be done in the next generation ! There will be giants then, and giant deeds. The

age has already, in some degree, caught the idea ; but it needs to be pressed, and put in a still stronger light. Let me press it. There is weighty reason why we should set Christians about the Father's business *early*. How do we know they will have an opportunity to set about it late ? And, if they should, who can warrant that the late opportunity will not be neglected, as it usually is ? How much better to make sure of the present, and so of the whole future ! How much better to begin early, work long, and accomplish much ; to enlist youthful zeal and habit and facility on that side whence it will never be necessary to unsettle and painfully extirpate them, but where, the longer they continue and strengthen, the more auspicious the case will be ! In truth, youth cannot afford to decline, in favor of age, so healthful, pleasant, honorable, righteous, useful, and remunerative a business as that of the Father above.

It is a business more important than any worldly calling ever engaged in, however extensive and fruitful in dollars and cents ; more important than any scientific work, however successful in unveiling Nature ; more important than the affairs of the nation : and youth, that wishes to do great things, and become illustrious in the doing, and all on

sure and proportionate wages of the life that now is and that which is to come, why, let it at once be about its Father's business.

It is wonderfully best to go into the vineyard at an early hour of the day. In general, men who do not begin to work then will see the sun go down on their idleness. But if, unfortunately, and we are also compelled to say guiltily, a man has delayed till the eleventh hour, and the low sun is within a few diameters of its setting, let him not lose the inch of time that remains. It is lamentable, and shall be for a lamentation, that, through all his fresh and vigorous time, he has lived in vain, or worse than in vain, so far as heaven's work is concerned. And now, it must be confessed, it is impossible for him to make his probation what he might have made it fifty years ago. The best lot is gone irrevocably; but it is still possible to escape the worst. Shall the night set in, and find absolutely nothing done? Eleven hours have run to waste: shall the entire twelve do so? Will you throw from you the last jot of probationary time that is left for glorifying God, and serving the cause of religion among your fellow-creatures? Better enter the field late than *never*. Do not allow your day to close without some few strokes of labor at the Father's busi-



ness. Hasten, or it will so close. Do you not see how long the shadows are already, and how fast they are lengthening? You will have time only to give a few warnings, plead in a few exhortations, utter a few prayers, give a few dollars, and then the night will shut down upon you. Have you any time to lose in timidities and procrastinations, in slumberings and sleepings? Not a moment. At last, at the very last, do promptly a little that is worth the doing. You have all your life been working for yourself, or trying to do it. Close your career with a kind of work that will yield you more satisfaction, as well as profit. Close it with work for God and religion and the souls of men. If you have not time left to bring in sheaves from the darkening field, at least scatter some good seed, which shall spring up, and be your memorial after you have gone.

# **WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

## **III.**

### **APOSTLES.**

### **III. APOSTLES WORKING BY PREACH- ING.**

## APOSTLES WORKING BY PREACHING.

EVERY true minister is called of God. But in our day this call is a matter of interpretation, sometimes of difficult interpretation. It has to be read from a variety of providential circumstances, more or less obscure, and not seldom hieroglyphical. Not so the call of the earliest Christian preachers. The voice that said to them, "*Go*," was audible. They saw the lips of Jesus fashioning the sound they heard. After that, not a man of them could doubt his vocation. That wretched self-mistrust, those perplexed days and restless, questioning nights, which have so severely tried many of their successors in the ministerial office, lest it should be found that they ran before they were sent, were, happily, unknown to Peter and John and the rest of those preachers on whom were laid the foundation-labors of Christianity.

From the nature of their circumstances, the primitive preachers were *pilgrim*-workers. There were no churches ready founded to their hands. No Christian congregations, with convenient and noble sanctuaries, stood ready to welcome and settle and support them. They must go about laying first stones ; they must stand at the street-corner, and tell their uninvited story ; they must take post in the market, and painfully gather their own audiences ; they must seize their opportunity, and rise in the synagogue to show reluctant Jews how to find Jesus in the Law and Prophets ; and, just as soon as they had made out to start in any place a Christian church, with its proper officers and sacraments, they moved on to another place to repeat the process, and then to another, and so on, occasionally revisiting and confirming the infant churches they had founded. They were itinerant evangelists. They were roaming missionary societies. They were Christ's couriers, preaching as they ran. New faces, new places, new circumstances of prejudices and manners, were continually presenting themselves, as with staff in hand, and Gospel on lips, and tropics in heart, they perpetually went and came. Their home was the world. Their parish was mankind. They held them-

selves ready to go anywhere (to east or west, to city or country, to home or foreign field, to field great or small) for the Gospel's sake. Indeed, this was the principle which, plain to see, lay at the center of their commission, — "Be ready to go wherever you are *wanted*." They saw it, obeyed it, and "went everywhere, preaching the word."

Those primitive preachers were *competent* workmen. Great Paul, with his scholastic training and natural force of talent and eloquence, would have been deemed competent at once, almost anywhere, and by almost any judge. But how was it with Peter and John, and others who had been brought as publicans and fishermen? Were these qualified men? Could they explain, argue, persuade, defend, attack, move, in the interest of their Master—do it worthily and powerfully? That some of them, at least, were well endowed with native faculty, we can easily see from their writings—see it none the less easily because their pens give us the very thoughts and even words of God. And this we know in regard to all of them, that their native powers were enlightened and trained and empowered after a most extraordinary fashion. For three years were they in Christ's own magnificent Seminary. They sat constantly at the feet of

Him, the incomparable teacher ; and while His doctrine dropped as the rain, and His speech distilled as the dew on all, it fell with special power and sweetness on the minds of the apostles, that they might become the professional teachers of all. Who of us has had a tuition equal to that ? It was worth more to a scholar in religion than a curriculum of a thousand years through all the chartered colleges and seminaries of mankind. But even a richer empowering than this was given to those first Christian preachers. Their sufficing natural abilities, and the splendid personal teaching which they had from Jesus, were re-enforced by unknown measures of the Holy Ghost. I refer not now to that Divine influence, in virtue of which some of them enlarged the Sacred Canon and wrought miracles, but to those spiritual forces coming from the third Person of the Trinity, and open to all Christian ministers, which gave them, in addition to soundness in the faith, unction, convincing and persuading power, a sacred tact and magnetism for reaching the judgment and hearts of their hearers. None of us doubt that the apostles were endued with this power from on high. They were not allowed to stir a single step on their mission till they had received this mighty appendix

to their talents and their education. As soon as it came, they tarried at Jerusalem no longer. Their ministerial equipment was complete. They went forth with a preaching that was the very sword of the Spirit itself. Nothing could have been brighter, sharper, better tempered. It flashed through society as sword never flashed before. Yes, those men were *competent* ministers. Commend us to such qualifications. One would be willing to exchange any amount of Greek and Hebrew for such an outfit. A great work had been given them to do, and God furnished them to match. Could we have heard those chosen men proclaim the Gospel, we should have felt, that, beyond controversy, they were the right men in the right place. We might have noticed the absence of some of the dainty fashions of rhetoric, and some of the gilded trappings of oratory; but we should have felt ourselves in the presence of just the preaching "to prepare the way of the Lord, and make His paths straight."

They were *diligent* workmen, those first Christian ministers. I think we may take Paul as a specimen of the whole company; for, though he tells us that he "labored more abundantly than they all," yet it is plain that all were of substantially the



same general spirit and style of career. He was wrapped up in his sacred calling: it was his eating and drinking. Read the account he gives, in the eleventh chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, of his crowded work and almost terrible industry. Read his injunctions to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; give thyself wholly to these things that thy profiting may appear to all." Such was his counsel, and such was his practice. I have no idea that Paul's diligence in his calling would suffer by comparison with that of any healthfully driving business-man of even this hurrying and competing age. In the best sense of the words, he was a man of one idea. Every thing had to bend to his preaching of the Gospel. He lay in wait for opportunities. He created them. He promptly set up his pulpit wherever he could find a congregation. Early or late, Sabbath or week day, synagogue or grove or Areopagus or Cæsar's palace or ship-cabin or city-street, he lifted up his voice of preaching wherever and whenever men could be brought to hear. To be sure, he sometimes wrought at his tent-making; but it was in order that he might better preach the Gospel. The same sort of spirit animated all the apostles. At

the outset of their ministry, finding themselves cumbered by the secular affairs of the church, they cast them all off, exclaiming, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables : we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word." Here we see the whole apostolate starting on a principle of urgent ministerial industry. They were all impatient of losing time ; and they considered, that, for them, time not spent in preaching, or in preparing to preach, was time lost. And it was. They had an immense mission. The evangelization of a world was on their hands. No wonder that their bare arms swung from morning to night, that the world might swing from night to morning. Methinks I hear now that ceaseless musical din across the ages. Methinks I see now that ceaseless shower of sparks going up from yonder distant horizon and laborious first Christian century. It is as if a thousand brazen anvils were ringing. It is as if the earth were raining stars heavenward. "In labors abundant."

They were *earnest* workers and preachers. Such a thing as a cold diligence is possible ; and, indeed, every scholar knows that there are now scores of other scholars studying away at the most momen-

tots subjects for twelve and fifteen hours a day, and yet almost as unemotional as stones. Such was not the diligence of the pioneer Christian preachers. They glowed as they ran: in fact, ran *because* they glowed. Were not two of them entitled to be called Boanerges? Was not Peter's Pentecost sermon throbbing with zeal? Was it not the standing doctrine of all of them, that it is "well to be zealously affected in a good thing, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and doing with the might what the hands find to do"? Depend upon it, none of those original heralds of the cross were very far behind him who said, "Remember, that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears." They were all Pauline, if not Pauls. Their careers heated their times, because they were themselves aflame. Frozen bodies do not leave such trails of light and such heated atmospheres behind them. They were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. They were God's nomadic furnaces for warming and kindling a frozen age. Could we have made part of their audiences, we doubtless should have seen the blaze of their feelings in the flash of the eye, in the flush of the cheek, in the emphasis of the gesture, and in the quivering vitalism

and electric outpour of the whole earnest man. Indeed, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost — that flaming tongue, that two-edged sword, that impersonation of vivid energy and eloquence. Wild fire we should not have seen. Extravagances of speech and manner and measures would have been wholly wanting. Frantic theatricals could never have disfigured an inspired preaching. But such grave and majestic earnestness as befits Divine ambassadors, such solid, regulated, healthy, yet mighty enthusiasm as naturally belongs to the conduct of themes and interests the most momentous, they doubtless manifested in the whole style of their preaching. And if some preacher of the present kindles into fervor and blaze, let no one accuse him of violating the proprieties of his office. He has not become unapostolic. He is only doing over in this century what the sainted founders of our religion universally did in the first.

The first preachers were *bold* workmen. Men can speak warmly and yet timidly. In safe times and on safe subjects, earnest words and ways are most popular with both hearers and speakers. But Christian ministers, if they would do their duty, must sometimes present offensive aspects

of truth, and present them quite as earnestly as any of the pleasing aspects. The apostles and their helpers were very largely under this necessity. They must preach for the very purpose of overturning all the cherished systems of religion then extant—ancient systems, rooted systems, systems branching into all the thinking and usages and literature of the times, systems wedded to governments and supposed to be essential to them. So their ministry was no sinecure. It was the most dangerous of employments next to a political insurrection. It *was* insurrection against public opinion, public usage, public institutions, inextricably intertangled with the whole social structure. Such preaching was a standing invitation, not merely to contempt and hatred and hard words, but to prisons, to scaffolds, to stakes, to crosses, to dens of wild beasts the worst of which were in the human form. Did the apostles think that Heaven would interfere for their protection? They had seen their Master die for His preaching. He had foretold stormy careers for them in the most explicit terms: "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons; being brought before kings and rulers for my

name's sake. They shall scourge you in their synagogues, and persecute you from city to city; and some of you they shall kill and crucify; and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." See how clearly those men knew what was before them! Did they decline that dangerous preaching? After they had begun it, did the persecutors find it an easy thing, or a *possible* thing, to seal their lips, save by the seal of death? They were indomitable. Their flinty faces looked forth from above their unarmed hands, so calmly and steadily into the eye of danger—that eye, cruel and audacious as it was, grew tremulous, and at last sank before them. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they marvelled." "Long time abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord." "Preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." In such passages as these, get glimpses of their courageous and unconquerable preaching. They counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus. "Whether men will hear or forbear," was their motto. They kept back nothing that was profitable: they shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. Was it warn-

ing, was it reproof, was it rugged command or awful threat—all faithfully and fearlessly it was delivered at the mark to which God had sent it. They feared God too much to fear the face of clay. Did Paul tremble before Felix? No! Felix trembled before Paul. Could we have seen those defenseless preachers dealing in their stern, impartial faithfulness, now with a city mob, now with counselors and kings, now with harder, haughtier, and more criminal philosophers and rabbis, giving, with unquivering voice, to every man his portion in due season, though black brows were bent on them, and vollied hisses came, and savage shouts, and a stony tempest even, I wot we should have felt like standing uncovered in presence of such magnificent intrepidity. I bow before the very idea of it, the luminous shadow of that substance, as I would not before a king. May that ancient valor, beyond all Greek or Roman fame, deliver God's word from all our pulpits!

I believe the primitive preaching to have been *alarming*. Indeed, I am sure of it, considering that it was appointed and wrought with by Him who Himself preached, "I forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, who, after He has killed, has power

to cast into hell : yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." I find, that, after Peter had preached a sermon, a great crowd pressed around to ask what they must do to be *saved* ; and I find, too, that, after Paul had preached a while to the Roman Governor, that sinner began to shake as if the palsy had seized him. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, I persuade men," said this model minister. And, when he reasoned of temperance and righteousness, he took care to reason also of a judgment to come ; for he was one who believed that "God is a consuming fire," and that "His wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

In this vein write all the New-Testament authors. In this vein they undoubtedly preached. How dared they do otherwise, after getting such a commission as this, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned" ? They did not dare it, bold as they were, but preached everywhere that the wicked should go away into everlasting punishment, and only the righteous into life eternal. In their preaching, they treated men as so many lost sinners, proclaimed Christ to them



as their only Helper, insisted on repentance and faith as the only means of securing that help, insisted on immediate action as the only safety against loss of the soul. This was a very alarming way of preaching, especially to men who found echoes of it in their own consciences and in the terrible devastations of nature. It was just the preaching to make the hearts of men tremulous as aspen-leaves. And multitudes did tremble before it, soul and body. And as they asked, with lips that quivered, and knees that smote together, "What must we do to be saved?" those ancient ministers never expressed any surprise at such an inquiry. They did not lift up astonished eyebrows and hands on that quaking of their audiences, and say, "What have we said to call out such behavior as this?" It was just what their preaching was fitted and designed to produce. They meant to affright sinners at their frightful condition. They meant to make them tremble for a while, that they might not tremble for ever. It were a wretched sort of kindness to men to cloak their situation from them till it passes remedy, till all is over and their bell sets to its eternal tolling.

The preaching of the first ministers was steeped in prayer, was full of Christ, was luminous with

their holy lives. From the beginning of their ministry, they deliberately proceeded on the principle of giving themselves "continually to *prayer*" in connection with their preaching. Not content with steeping their preaching in their own prayers, they sought to steep it also in the prayers of the whole church; and turning their faces east, west, north, south, they exclaimed, "Brethren, pray for us." Steeped in prayer, and equally steeped in the idea of *Jesus*. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." "Determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified," the looking and the pointing of their preaching was steadily toward their Master. Instead of preaching morality and philanthropy and deism and natural religion, they preached the *Christian* Religion, and in so doing preached all the rest as by the lips of Christ. Their preaching came to be characterized as "the preaching of the cross." Wherever they were, they faced Calvary. They went widely apart; but they were always so many lines of longitude meeting in one pole — Christ. Their preaching was like the New Testament itself. We do not find Christ's name in every sentence, or in every chapter even; but, for

all that, every sentence is an arc of a circle whose center is He. All doctrine and fact shape themselves and revolve themselves about Him as their focus and sun. They had many ideas in their preaching; but the pivotal and royal idea, whose sway all others acknowledged, was that of the Redeemer. They preached Him first, Him last, Him middle, Him without end. And then they were careful to second their preaching by a *holy life*. They lived themselves as they taught others to live—not perfectly, indeed, but substantially; and so that they could appeal to the people in such language as this, “Ye are our witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you.” It is no modern discovery, but one well known, even in Old-Testament times, “What hast thou to do to declare my judgments?” and so they carried the Gospel in clean and shining hands to the watchful people. From the commanding eminence of a personal sanctity, they overlooked the enemy’s camp, and brought to bear upon it the sacred artillery of their preaching.

I have made a discovery: it is that the working traits of the primitive ministry are good for these days. With them the apostles had a great suc-

cess. The truth sped as on wings. It triumphed from place to place like the sweep of ocean tides. When I think of the Pentecost of Jerusalem, and the Pentecost of Samaria, and many another Pentecost, it almost seems as if our Northern Lights had gone about to the East, and were springing their glorious arches over Judæa Capta and the Acts of the Apostles. All in connection with such a ministry as we have been considering. Did it *happen* so? God has a choice as to what fellow-laborers He has. Who has not? Who does not work with the greatest heartiness and freedom in connection with congenial associates? Such associates were the apostles to God. In character and mode of work, they were such as He approved of, such as He called for, such as befitted their mission; and hence it was that His right hand laid itself so mightily by the side of theirs as they plied their sublime toil in the Vineyard.

Of course, we have here a stream of light on the great need and true policy of our own time. We do not need the agriculture, or the manufactures, or the science, of the first century: we can do better. But we cannot do better than to have the religious successes of that early time. We have

made no improvements in that direction. Oh for the mighty shaking, the thorough work, the triumphant march, of the days when the truth turned the world upside down! We know that this must be, not by might and power, not by genius and learning, not by tact and management and policy, not by wisdom of human words and deeds, however profound and sublime. It must be by a Divine working. And yet the settled plan is that this working shall be a co-working. Certain congenial human ministries must be associated with it. In fact, we must have over again the primitive ministry, the called preachers, the preachers ready to go anywhere for the Master's sake (to city or country, to east or west, to this land or foreign, to place conspicuous or place obscure), the preachers able, diligent, earnest, bold, alarming, prayerful, exemplary, and full of the idea of Christ. If we can only have these, the way to success is clear; not otherwise. What sometimes seems success (crowds of hearers, great applause, and even great gatherings for the church) is simply a delusion. It is only the hollow and transient reward of the mountebank or mere genius. It does not mean any thing that lasts. It does not mean true and durable conversions to God. The preaching that

actually wins men to a new character and life is the only successful preaching. Any other, though spoken of at the ends of the earth, and become historic and even immortal in the name of genius and eloquence, is merely sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; that is to say, a musical failure.

May God shape all His ministers of to-day after the primitive fashion, and cause all the people to crave such a ministry for themselves and their children! Who will not join me in this prayer? It means a co-working God in our parishes. It means the demonstration of the Spirit. It means a preaching that flees to its mark on the pinions of the Holy Ghost. It means a Church *established* — nay, a church growing like a cedar of Lebanon. In short, it means almost every thing the world needs, and casts its great orbit about even that petition, “Thy kingdom come, and will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.” So it is just the prayer for us. And when it goes up so as to becloud the whole sky, then, O Earth, lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh; the long-talked-of Millennium is knocking at the door; and Heaven, that has so long tolled, tolled, over dying and dead men, may triumphantly ring out

all her silver bells ; for the kingdoms of this world are at the point of becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

# **WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

## **IV.**

### **SATAN.**



#### **IV. A WORKING MINISTRY AND COUNTER-WORKING SATAN.**

## A WORKING MINISTRY AND COUNTER-WORKING SATAN.

**A**LL the work done in God's Vineyard is not to the end of building up. A very considerable part of it is for pulling down. This part is done by Satan. His working is a counter-working. He industriously sets himself against the work of God and His ministers. Particularly, he does all that a vigilant, active, shrewd, unscrupulous, vastly-experienced, and powerful angel, with enough emissaries at his beck to make him practically omnipresent among men, can do to make of no effect that form of Christian work which we call the preaching of the Gospel.

It is mainly this preaching that established Christianity in the world, and which has kept it established. It is this, which, during the last half-century, has made such great progress toward converting the heathen nations, and is now shaking all the systems of idolatry and false religion the world over. It is this, which, in every Christian community, heads the moral forces which contend

against vices and disorders of all sorts, and keeps up and advances public morals from generation to generation. It has "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." So it is by far the greatest foe Satan has in the world.

Under these circumstances, what is to be expected of Satan, but that he will assume toward Christian preaching every possible relation of active and crafty opposition? In fact, he fights it as he fights nothing else. He attacks it at all points, and by every method. He is campaigning against it, in season and out of season. He strikes against it from above and from beneath, from right and from left, from front and from rear, from without and from within. In all God's great Vineyard there is not a workman more industrious and spirited than this same counterworking Satan.

*He tries to preach another Gospel.*

Satan is not opposed to preaching ; by no means. He is only opposed to the preaching *of the Gospel*. Nothing would suit him better than to have all the pulpits of the land speak eloquently every Sabbath, provided they would only speak his messages, instead of God's. By all means let them speak, but

let them speak for him, instead of Christ; for deadly error, instead of saving truth, the more atrocious the error the better. So he sets himself to work. And the consequence is, that, after a while, Paul finds himself encountering certain persons whom he is obliged to describe as being "ministers of Satan," "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" — finds himself giving warning that certain congregations will "not endure sound doctrine, but will, of their own lusts, heap to themselves teachers, and shall turn away their ears from hearing the truth, and be turned into fables" — finds himself lamenting to the Ephesians, that, 'after his departure, grievous wolves will enter among them, not sparing the flock; that even of their own elderhood men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.' So Satan sets himself at work. And the consequence is, that, after a while, the Waldenses look forth from their mountain-fastnesses to see Romanism preached in nearly all the pulpits of Europe. So he sets himself at work; and, after a while, Neander looks about him and sees infidelity taught sabbathly in almost every Protestant Church of Germany and Switzerland. So he sets himself

at work ; and we look about us, and see — what ? Schoolhouses, public halls, and meeting-houses, East and West, where men and women preach against the Divinity of Christ, His atonement, regeneration by the Holy Ghost, responsibility in a future state for character and conduct in this world, and even a God. We look, and confess to the fulfillment of the prediction : “ But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.” Here we have the finger of Satan. Here we have his most choice way, the way he greatly prefers above all others, of opposing the preaching of the Gospel — that by a contradicting preaching. If he can, he makes a Judas, a Strauss, a Priestley, a Parker, among the apostles. At all events, he can send through the country, and especially among the frontier settlements, a swarm of lecturers of the lowest grades, male and female, teaching at the same time bad grammar, bad manners, bad morals, and bad religion ; sowing and cultivating the very worst tares, to the exceeding misfortune of the Vineyard.

*Satan tries to prevent the preaching of the Gospel.*

He prefers to do more. He prefers to put in place of the evangelical preaching one positively heretical and destructive. But, in case he cannot do this (as, thank God! he very often cannot), he then is anxious to do the next worst thing — to suppress pulpits and sermons altogether. Give him his largest scope of choice, and he had much rather have all the pulpits in the city of New York weekly discoursing infidelity and radical heresy than to have them silent; but he had much rather have them as silent as the grave than to have them preaching the Gospel. His first choice would be that my pulpit should weekly lend itself to subtly undermine Christian faith and virtue; but, in default of this, his pleasure would be that it should not preach at all, but the Sabbath bell become dumb, and the decorous congregation disband itself into visiting, roaming, scorning Sabbath-Breakers. How many places where just this has happened! Satan has extinguished the preaching altogether. What difficulties Home-Missionaries often have in introducing regular, or even occasional, Christian preaching in places where it has long been discontinued, or was never enjoyed! Read the experience of Whitefield, and the Wesleys, and the Haldanes,

and our Western missionaries. Satan rises up in resistance; he rouses his emissaries; he will not, if possible, have any preaching there, if he has to throw stones to prevent it. Let the preachers come as Abner Kneelands and Fanny Wrights, teaching atheism and socialism, and they shall be welcome; but, as to a teaching of Christ, he will make all possible insurrection against it. For, as the Revelation has it, the beast out of the bottomless pit makes war upon the witnesses. So Satan hindered Paul, and one greater than Paul. The apostle, on a certain time, was anxious to go and preach to the Thessalonians; but since he was certain, if allowed to go, to preach Christ's Gospel instead of Satan's, "Satan hindered" him. Jesus started to preach the Gospel in Gadara; but, in order to prevent it, a legion of devils, Satan's emissaries, so roused the fear and ill-will of the people, that they besought Him to depart out of their coasts. The swine-destroying demons meant to exclude Christ's sermons from that district; and they were permitted to accomplish their object. They could not make Him speak "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils;" and so they prevented His speaking at all. And what evangelical and striving preacher of to-day but sorely

feels the presence of a mightily-hindering Satan in his field?

*Satan tries to make the Gospel-preaching as faulty as he can.*

He prefers, above all things, another Gospel — to stand and preach to the people himself. If he cannot have another Gospel, he chooses no Gospel, the entire absence of religious teaching. If he cannot be gratified even in this, then he chooses the next worst thing in order; viz., a Gospel-preaching as tame as possible, and does his best to make it so. Paul would not allow himself to be ordained over again into an apostle of Satan; neither would he allow himself to be suppressed into a “dumb dog:” hence the best the enemy could do was to mar the inevitably sound preaching of the apostle as much as might be. So he sent on him a thorn in the flesh (“a messenger of Satan to buffet him”) to distract him, to hamper him in his labors, perchance to make his bodily presence weak and his speech contemptible. Here is a young man, devoted, of good abilities, and determined to give his life to the preaching of the Gospel. Satan cannot stop him. But, somehow, the crafty enemy does contrive to get him only



half educated, and so to shear from his ministry half its power. Another is persuaded into such imprudences as incurably disorder his health : and the devil congratulates himself that he has obliged the man to work for Christ all his life long with only one hand. Still another is worked into such straitened circumstances that the vigor of his ministry is sapped by the anxieties of a narrow and precarious subsistence. If there are any infelicities of manner or matter which the adroit foe can manage to foist into the pulpit anywhere, to serve as a drawback on its Christian power, it is eagerly done. He will hamper the delivery, and mar the substance, of every Gospel message just as much he can ; and he is perfectly unscrupulous as to the means of doing it.

*Satan tries to keep men away from the preaching of the Gospel.*

We come now to a new class of efforts on the part of this arch opposer of the Gospel. Those already considered have for their direct object to damage the preaching itself : those I am now to speak of have for their direct object to damage the people on which the preaching proposes to bear. If Satan cannot turn the preacher into a heretic,

if he cannot silence him, if he cannot so mar the message he delivers but that it remains a valid and cutting Gospel, then his greatest concern is to keep people away from hearing it. He uses many arguments for this purpose, and varies them to suit the character and circumstances and mood of the person dealt with. He tells him that he can spend his time just as profitably at home as at church ; (has he not a Bible and good books which he can read ?) or that he belongs to another denomination than that of the preacher ; or that he lives too remote from the preaching ; or that the congregation are proud, and do not care about him ; or that he cannot afford to attend ; or that his health will not allow it ; or that it is too hot, too cold, too wet, too dusty, too breezy, too cloudy, too glaring. In this way, the enemy manages to keep multitudes away from Gospel-preaching altogether, or to make their attendance so irregular and infrequent that it proves of little service. They are very flimsy arguments, doubtless, that he uses ; will not bear examining ; are quite unworthy of the abilities of a chief angel : but they are the best that can be had, and quite effective with persons who are more than willing to find excuses for doing wrong. Do you want to know how it

happens that a third of the people of this Commonwealth are habitual neglecters of public worship? It is a short answer; and tolerably complete. Counterworking *Satan* is at the bottom of the evil. He is deeply interested in making the hearers of the Gospel as few as possible; for none understand better than he that faith cometh by hearing, and salvation by faith, and that he is quite sure of the soul of every man who willfully and perseveringly cuts himself off from the public ordinances of religion. This is enough for him. He could work night and day with such a prospect.

*Satan tries to make the hearers of the Gospel as faulty hearers as possible.*

To prevent the people from being hearers is his first and choicest problem. Not succeeding in this, he proposes, as the next best thing, to lower the quality of their hearing to the lowest possible point. Let them sleep. Let their thoughts go scouting to the ends of the earth. Let them do imaginary plowing, trading, building, visiting, and what not. Let them watch their neighbors' behavior and dresses. Let them criticise the preacher's manner, let them balance his periods, let them gamut his tones, let them concern themselves to

know whether his thoughts and arrangement and figures and logic are agreeable to the canons of rhetoric and good taste. And let them *not* concern themselves to apprehend clearly, and feel strongly, and embrace practically, the truth which constitutes the subject-matter of the preaching. This is what Satan wants of the congregation, if they insist on being a congregation. He had much rather have them keep out of hearing and sight of public worship; but, if they *will* go to it, let them go to be this sort of hearers. And to make them such he goes with them, and posts himself at their right hand. Anon he is felt softly and cautiously pressing upon the eyelids of some. Then he wheels round to the imaginations of others gay chariots, with the steps down, and invites them to go riding gratuitously over their farms, through their houses and workshops, to Washington, to China, to the Moon, in fact, any where they please—up or down, by land or sea, far or near. Next, for those whose thoughts are indisposed to outside excursions, he opens a school—a school of fashions, a school of manners, a school of poetry, philosophy, rhetoric, elocution, according to the various tastes—and offers to teach during church hours for nothing. What a

busy worker in the Vineyard — counterworker ! *Anything* that the word of God may be made of none effect, may return to Him void, may be as water spilled upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up !

*Lastly, Satan tries to make good hearers of the Gospel reject it, neglect it, or, at least, postpone it.*

Either will do, though he would prefer a point-blank rejection to any thing else, and an indefinite neglect to a definite postponement.

Some persons hear the Gospel well, despite all Satan's devices. They give their attention : their understandings clearly apprehend the truth ; their hearts feel the force of it. What then ? Does he give them up without any further struggle ? By no means. He has still another string to his bow — a string twisted with a threefold strand. To be sure, it is his last string. He is come to his last cards ; he is leading up his forlorn hope : if he fails now, the preaching of the Cross will conclusively win the day. But then this last resource of his is a very strong one, and many, many a time has won the battle for him after the miscarriage of all his other means. So he does not

despair, though he does see the Gospel-hearer sit devouring the Christian doctrine with eyes and ears, his cheeks suffused with interest, and, perhaps, his eyelids moist with tears. He yet may be persuaded to curtly reject the truth which he so clearly sees, and so strongly feels. Still greater chance is there that he can be betrayed into an indefinite dismissal of his impressions, and a greater chance still that he can be prevailed upon to postpone action on his impressions to some given day not very remote. So the enemy goes busily to work, and with fluent eloquence tells him that perhaps the Bible is a fiction; that at least God is wonderfully merciful; that he has yet a long time to live, and can change his course just when he pleases; that it is a pity he should not carry out such and such schemes of pleasure, profit, or ambition; that, on the one hand, worldly pleasures are full of sweetness, while on the other a religious life is dry and barren and hard and cold as a polar desert. The crafty fiend! He suggests, he asserts, he argues, he paints, and in all he lies, just as if his life depended on the death of that poor soul. Possibly he is successful in the highest measure; and the deluded man abruptly and desperately decides that he will be an infidel,

and have nothing more to do with religion. And oh, how all below rejoices, and all above mourns, over that dreadful decision! But more likely the sinner cannot be brought to take such an extreme position; in which case, Satan says to him, "At least dismiss the subject for the present — time enough yet." This policy is much more likely to succeed; and, if it does, Satan is still jubilant because he has succeeded in getting a new chain on his captive, and in suddenly dragging him a thousand leagues nearer ruin. But possibly this indefinite dismissal of the subject is also too strong a measure for the sinner. So thoroughly aroused and efficient has been his hearing of the Gospel, he refuses to take it. Then says Satan to him, "Put off the matter till *to-morrow* — it is only a trifling delay — and then you shall settle it without more ado by becoming a Christian." This is a still more plausible proposal, and, in fact, the most plausible and moderate that the tempter can make. If this is not successful, he has done; he has reached the end of his line. But there is a great chance that it will be successful. It has succeeded thousands and hundreds of thousands of times, and is exceedingly prone to succeed again. If it does, then Satan is hardly less gratified than

before ; for none know better than he how many risks there are between now and to-morrow, and how rarely the convenient to-morrow of the sinner reaches him.





**WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

**V.**

**LAY-HELPERS AT PHILIPPI.**

## **V. LAY-HELPERS AT PHILIPPI.**

## LAY-HELPERS AT PHILIPPI.

**I**N his labors in that part of the Vineyard called Philippi, Paul had the help of several Christian lay-workers. There was Clement. There were others, not named, whose lives were so exemplary that the apostle was sure of their salvation. Among these was one who had almost kept pace with the apostle himself in his diligent and zealous work—a true yoke-fellow. “And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which labored with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers whose names are in the book of life.”

Every Christian minister knows, from his own experience, that it must have been a very great comfort and help to Paul to be so well seconded by members of the Philippian church. He must have worked with more heart, have borne his trials more firmly, and have come to larger success from the fact that he was not left by other Christians to work alone in their tough and weedy vineyard. Such help *always* gives ministers courage. They

are satisfied that their labor will not be in vain in the Lord. They are convinced that they have real Christians about them in those warm-hearted and self-denying co-laborers. There is a world of comfort and energy in such a conviction. There are conversions and revivals in it. Yes, Paul, amid his trials and labors at Philippi, must have found himself greatly animated by seeing the faithful Clements and true yoke-fellows putting shoulders to his shoulder as he sought to win men to Christ. He seems to have had no doubt that the names of these helpers were in the Book of Life. Any one who enters at all into the character of Paul well knows that such an assurance as that was worth more to his loving and Christian soul than a mine of gold. How came he by it? Not by an inspiration; for even apostles admitted Ananias and Sapphiras and Simons to the church — not by the testimony of these helpers themselves; for Paul knew how the heart could deceive itself — not by looking back on their experience at the supposed time of their conversion; for none knew better than he of the stony-ground hearers, who at first look as green and flourishing as any. No: it was, I think, by seeing the *active, working* character of their piety. They were more or less yoke-fellows

with himself — this convinced him that they were genuine Christians. Had they suffered a brief alarm, felt a sudden relief on the strength of it, taken the Christian name, and ever after folded their arms, and looked idly on while the apostle sweat at his lonely work day and night among them, would he have been able to say of them, "Whose names are in the Book of Life"? I think not. The ring of the true metal would have been wanting. More likely he would have felt compelled to say, "Whose names are *not* in the Book of Life."

None but Clements and true yoke-fellows can now properly satisfy any pastor that his church has in it any spark of religion. He may hope; but he must also doubt. Where there is no Christian activity, there is no evidence of Christian life. How many pastors are longing, and longing in vain, for just such an array of assured and working Christians as stayed up the hands and heart of Paul at Philippi! They are generals without armies. They are sentinels to a sleeping camp, which no trumpet of theirs succeeds in rousing. They can almost read with envy what Paul says of his helpers in that heathen city of Macedon. Some of them would deem themselves happy, could they, among scores of men who have a name to

live, find two or three who are willing to yoke themselves with them for labor in Christ's cause.

But it seems that Paul had still other helps than those afforded by the Clements in the Philippian church. Pious *women* came to his aid. In what way they co-operated with him, we are not told. The customs of the East, especially out of Judæa, held females to a much more secluded and narrow sphere than is given them among ourselves. It is likely that the only ways open to them for helping the cause of Christ were those of personal labor with their own sex and their own families, of alms, and of private prayer. They could pray as mightily as the apostles themselves. They could, in some instances, give of their substance to multiply copies of the Scriptures, to defray the expenses of public worship and of the propagation of the Gospel. Their fathers, husbands, brothers, children, were open to their influence : they could urge them to repent, and believe, and afterward undertake heartily all manner of wise enterprises in behalf of religion. Their female friends and neighbors might be influenced by them to examine and embrace the Gospel. They could meet together for prayer, and mutual instruction or encouragement — in a word, do in their circle almost all that

men could do in theirs. In some or all of these ways, some female members of the church at Philippi labored for Christ, and helped Christ's minister in His work.

The progress of the Gospel has so greatly modified the usages of society, that, in the sphere which religion gives to woman, she has now a far wider field of action than she ever occupied in Greece. Her example is worth vastly more than it was in Paul's day. Her conversation, bearing freely as it does on all classes, is vastly more an element of power. Her influence in the family has grown to be one of the greatest levers of the age. As a teacher in the sabbath school, as a distributor of Bibles and other religious literature, as the frequenter and encourager of religious meetings, as the conscientious upholder of Christian ways and teaching in general society as well as in the domestic circle, as the ready sympathizer with Christian labors in which she cannot herself personally engage, she can become a right hand of religion and the ministry. She is already such in a multitude of parishes. It is but simple justice to say that she who was "last at the cross, and first at the sepulcher," still gives religion some of the most prompt and precious aid it receives in its



holy work. Many a servant of Christ can copy the language of Paul, and tell of the "women who have labored with me in the Gospel." And yet the powers of this agency are still only very imperfectly developed. Pious women might do a still larger work for Christ than any they have yet done. By their prayers, by such personal labor and sympathies as would not at all take them from their sphere, they might raise very high the standard of piety in almost every community, and make the preaching of the Gospel mighty to pull down strongholds. Let the female part of our churches not be afraid to labor for Christ. Such labor is not out of their sphere. Without trenching at all on a field that does not, Scripturally and by usage, belong to them, they might, with the blessing of God, make almost any wilderness to blossom, and almost any pastor's hands strong. Let them not even wait for some Clements among their associates to go before, and invite them by a working example. If others will be idle, let them bestir themselves alone. If others will not be instant in prayer, let them test its efficacy to the fullest extent. If others will not find time for sabbath schools and Bible-classes and prayer-meetings, let no unwise delicacy keep them back from cultivat-

ing the neglected Vineyard. Let them urge and beseech the dilatory fathers and brothers of the church to come up to the help of the Lord. Let each be earnestly faithful in her own home, and each earnestly urge every other to be faithful in hers. Let them do it for Christ's sake. Let them do it for their fathers', husbands', brothers' sake. Let them do it for the sake of the next generation.

It seems that the aid which Paul had from some women in the Philippian church was of the most valuable description. It was real *labor*, such as an apostle could call such. There is such a thing as playing at work for Christ, making some show of doing for Him without any thing like taxing effort. But it was real taxing effort which those women of Philippi put forth. And it was persevering too. More than two years had elapsed since Paul left them, and they were still at work, as is implied in the exhortation to *help* them. Sincere, earnest, protracted effort in behalf of religion — this was just the kind of seconding that the apostle wanted, just the kind that matched his own way of doing, just the kind to follow the preaching of the Gospel and make it mighty.

It would be hard to find a Christian pastor who does not earnestly desire to be seconded in the

same way. Some are thus seconded. Like the apostle, they can tell of the Priscillas who have been self-sacrificing helpers in Christ Jesus, of the Marys who have bestowed much labor upon them, of the Tryphenas and Tryphosas and Perses, who have "labored," or "labored much," in the Lord. Why cannot we have this primitive spirit of pious womanhood still more widely diffused? There is so much to be done! Satan is so active, always active! Floods of iniquity are coming in. The present generation is to be snatched from the pit, and the next generation carefully guided far from its brink. There is room and need for all sorts of labor, and steady labor, and the highest degree of labor. The prevailing doing for Christ is no labor at all. It does not deserve the name. It is mere play at work. It has no element of struggle and sacrifice in it. Is it not a fact that most persons almost feel entitled to stop when they have gone so far in doing for the religious welfare of the community that to go further will bring them upon the pricks of self-denial? Time and strength that can be profitably expended on the business of this world — it would seem as if they thought the cause of Christ had no claim on this. Not so thought those working women at

Philippi. It were a pity should any Christian women incline toward thinking so now. Do we need to have both eyes widely open to see, that if all the female part of a church were to engage, as with one soul, in zealous and persevering effort to promote religion, yet never going one step aside from their appropriate sphere, it would be such a Godsend to the community as it never yet had? No wonder, then, that I ask the daughters of Israel, as well as sons, to go forth into the needy Vineyard. You know how few the laborers are: make them many. You know how much there is to be done: see that ready hands are no longer wanting to do it. When the Lord says, "Whom shall I send?" and no answer comes from your brethren, then answer, "Lord, send *us*." And He will send you. He does send you. If ever there was a well-ascertained vocation of God, this is yours — to do what you can, in all womanly ways, in cultivating the Vineyard.

Generally, the church at Philippi are spoken of in terms of commendation. Yet there was some backwardness in Christian labor on the part of the brotherhood. Even the man who of them all best deserved to be called Paul's true yoke-fellow had grown somewhat negligent, and needed to be ex-

horted to go to the help of the pious women who were still busy at their labor. Certainly it looks as though they had come to be the leading agency for religious work in that city. They were not helpers of the Gospel only; they were not earnest, persevering helpers only; but they had really become the chief element of power and life in the church. The brunt of labor and sacrifice for the promotion of religion was being borne by them. Instead of being preceded and invited to come, as, doubtless, would have been most agreeable to them, themselves were under the necessity of preceding and inviting. Else the interests of religion would not advance in wicked Philippi, and might sink and die. All around them was a community going down swift into destruction. Friends and relatives were worshiping the gods of Olympus. Impure temples glittered on the heights and along the river banks. Everywhere the misery and corruption of human nature were beseeching the application of the great Christian remedy. How could hearts of flesh see all this unmoved and unworking? Was this a time and this a place to wait one for another, to give way to refinements of diffidence, to stand upon etiquette of precedence? — immortalities perishing, and Christ's cause bleed-

ing on every hand! As in a fire or a flood, let him or her help who can and will.

So, wherever religion is suffering, and souls are dying, there is the place for that Christian to be foremost who has the most heart to do. Be it manhood or womanhood that is most alive to the spiritual wants of the community, that is the agency to step unhesitatingly forward, alone, if need be, leading the way, if it may be, into the loudly-calling Vineyard. It is a sore evil indeed, if *men* cannot be found to bear the burden and heat of the day, or, at least, share them. But if they are all wanting, then let the precious spiritual interests be cared for as were those of Macedonian Philippi. Let the daughters and mothers of Israel come to Israel's help. Let the pastor be able, like Paul, to speak of the women who have labored with him in the Gospel. Let them go forward as having a call from God, and, strengthening their weakness with His strength, occupy the van which others refuse to take; looking rather at what things are dying than at the many who are disinclined to helping.

Speaking of Priscilla and Aquila, his helpers in Christ Jesus, Paul says, "Unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gen-

tiles." I think I perceive an aroma of just such warm gratitude on the part of the apostle toward his Philippian helpers. Nothing is expressed; and yet there is something in his way of speaking which shows that the writer looked upon that "true yoke-fellow" and those "laboring women" as having conferred on him a great personal favor. To be sure, it was not, strictly speaking, his work at which they wrought. It was theirs as much as it was his. He would be none the richer, none the greater, for its doing. But he had so identified himself with Christ and His cause, that what hurt that pained him, and what helped that rejoiced him. He lived for the sole purpose of promoting religion. Accordingly he counted every laborer in the Vineyard a personal benefactor.

This is a mark of the living Christian everywhere: Christ's work is by adoption his work; the dear Master's interests are his interests; the welfare of perishing souls is his welfare. He is grateful to every person who will make a true prayer, to every person who will attend a meeting, to every person who will drop a tract or speak a word or give an alms for Christ. People can hardly pay a Christian minister a higher compliment than to assume that it is doing him a personal favor, if they

attend church, sustain prayer-meetings, and give money and work to send the Gospel to the heathen abroad and at home. It is assuming that he loves human souls and their Saviour enough to make common interest with them. No one can do *me* a greater favor than by becoming Christian, or doing Christian work. I freely profess myself under obligations to any man or woman who will do any thing, however small, to raise the tone of religion, and save the souls which are dying. Were true yoke-fellows and Clements and women laboring in the Gospel to appear about me in great numbers, I should fully expect that my great gratitude for their help would soon be mingled with the joy of a great success.

Paul asks help for the Christian women who are laboring at Philippi. He calls for such help very earnestly: he even beseeches for it. He addresses his appeal particularly to one man who seems to have enjoyed special influence in the church, and whose previous conduct held out special ground for hope that the appeal would be successful. It was really an earnest appeal to the whole brotherhood to join hand with those pious women in their Christian enterprises. And why should they not? Were they under less obligation to Christ than



their sisters? Had he given the stronger an exemption from duties which He laid on the weaker? Had the fathers, husbands, sons, less interest at stake in having the community moral and Christian than the mothers, wives, and daughters? Paul was so earnest that the devoted women at Philippi should not be left to serve alone that he condescended to entreaty. And why should he not? Was it not grossly out of character that the appropriate labor of the whole church should be put on a few women, or even that they should be left to bear the brunt of that labor?

It is not an unheard-of case in these modern times — that of a pastor with two or three praying women laboring with him in the Gospel, while all the men of his church are so given up to their sowing and reaping, their buying and selling, as to aid him with no religious labor whatever. Such pastor always feels like *beseeking* those busy men to help those busy women. And why should he not? There are excuses for that backwardness, perhaps: in a case or two, there is the color of some deprecating argument which one might almost venture to speak out to any hearer, save God, and plead anywhere, save in the court of conscience. It seems these men can labor when the

world is the object to be labored for. It seems they can feel wants and dangers and necessities, provided these respect the body, and have to do with such plain matters as food and clothing, houses and lands, and all sorts of outward providings for rainy days. But what if they are asked to labor for Christ? What if the soul claims to be fed and clothed and well provided for, as well as the body? What if eternity thinks it hard to suffer postponement in favor of time, and religion thinks it hardly consistent that its desires, dangers, and necessities should be lost sight of amid cares and works for the transient and unsatisfying? Let the things be first which ought to be first! Let these men not leave on neighbors' hands the work which at least equally belongs to themselves! Let all the church do all the church's work!



**WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

**VI.**

**MARY.**

## VI. MARY DOING WHAT SHE COULD.

## MARY DOING WHAT SHE COULD.

MARY, the sister of Lazarus. She came behind Jesus as He reclined at meat in the house of Simon, and poured on His head and feet the contents of an alabaster box of very costly ointment, and then wiped His feet with her hair. Some of the guests were disposed to blame this act very severely. "Could not this spikenard have been sold for more than forty dollars? Are there not many people about, in want of the simplest comforts, to whom so large a sum might have brought a most happy relief?" The murmurs were loud. What a case of extravagant waste! But Christ judged very differently from Judas and his carping companions. What they blamed, he praised. He pronounced upon that seeming prodigality one of the strongest panegyrics he was ever known to utter — "Let her alone: why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this

also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. She hath done what she could."

In saying that Mary had done what she could, Christ, as I suppose, meant merely to declare that she had, in making Him that expensive present, taken the best course open to her at the time for expressing regard to Him. He did not mean that her piety in general was equal to her ability; nor did He mean that the only thing in her power to do for Him was to give Him this precious and royal anointing. Like all of us, Mary was a sinner; like all of us, she was able, by conversation, by prayer, by alms, by devout discharge of daily duties, to aid the cause of the Redeemer. But, apparently, she was not able at the time to make a more decided and striking expression of regard to that Redeemer than was made, when, in the presence of numbers, she poured upon Him the richest and most costly perfume which the stores of the merchant could supply, and then wiped His feet with her hair. Save as a mark of personal attachment and honor, the act evidently had very little utility. The odor of the ointment was sweet; its touch was cooling and grateful: but Christ cared very little for such things; and none knew this better than the members of that family at Bethany

with which He was so intimate. Hence almost the whole meaning of the offering, both as intended by Mary, and as understood by Christ, lay in its character as an expression of love and reverence toward Him.

Before this, Mary had shown how her heart was disposed toward Christ. At her first appearance in the sacred narrative, she is seen sitting at His feet, drinking in His instructions with reverent eagerness. She had already chosen the good part which could not be taken from her. But now the bud bursts into flower. Behold the affectionate, nay, passionate, admiration and loyalty which suddenly fling out their banners in this profuse and costly anointing and wiping of His feet with her hair! She put this honor on Jesus when to honor Him was unpopular; when, to the eye of sense, He could do little to reward attentions. Surely it was an honest attachment and reverence, which, in the days of the Saviour's humiliation and reproach, when all the great shunned and hated Him, and the masses of the people were being chafed against Him like waves which the wing of the storm is fanning, and His own strength against His enemies seemed all departing, poured out upon Him profuse and precious



spikenard fit for a king, and then bent to bathe his travel-worn feet in her festival tresses! Who doubts that she carried in her heart something fairer and whiter to Christ than the box of alabaster which she broke, something sweeter to Him than the perfume which filled the house of Simon, something which not hundreds of pence, but hundreds of kingdoms, are not enough to buy — a faith in Christ working by love?

Yet the atonement by which the Saviour now so powerfully summons the regard of men to Himself had not then been made. Mary did not even know that it would be made; probably, in common with the twelve, had not the least suspicion that Jesus was about to bear her sins and those of the world in His own body on the tree. Unless her knowledge went beyond that of the apostles themselves she had no clear idea of His Divinity at this time; nor, seeing Him only very seldom, as she did, could she have had as complete a view of His human character as is now given us in the New Testament. Moreover, almost the entire force of public sentiment, as we have seen, set with prodigious strength against the Nazarene. Attachment and respect for Him in Mary were discouraged fiercely by nearly all the social influences amid

which she lived. Not a tithe of such discouragement is brought to bear on the beginning or progress of our personal tenderness and loyalty for Christ. The land is filled with churches professing to love, and inviting all to love, the Lord Jesus in sincerity. It is the professed national faith that Jesus is infinitely worthy of all love and homage from all men. It is true that Mary had one advantage over ourselves, and that certainly no small one—a personal vision of Christ, and sensible intercourse with Him. But I cannot think that the few and brief opportunities of this intercourse which she enjoyed are sufficient to balance the vast superiority of our position in other respects. On the whole, we have the vantage-ground for the development of a hearty affection and admiration for the Saviour. We are bound, therefore, to love and honor Him more than did Mary. If her heart held feelings towards Him more precious and fragrant than the costly ointment whose odor filled the house with its sweetness, what sweet and far-scenting spikenard of tender and reverential regard ought our hearts to hold as within whitest alabaster !

But Mary was not content with merely possessing these precious feelings toward her Master.

She would fain express them. There they were in the sanctuary of her bosom — real, solid, glittering like so many jewels. She saw them constantly. She knew that God, also, ever saw them. What need, then, of making any outward manifestation? Yet she was not satisfied. Nothing would do but she must cast around her for some way of bringing out into expressive act the mute and imprisoned love and veneration which she felt. She bethought herself of the entertainment that Simon was about to make. Cannot her heart express itself in connection with that? A plan occurs to her. She draws out her hoarded money, and hies to the merchant. She waits with fluttering heart for the set day. At last it comes, and the guests are in their places; when, lo! the sister of Lazarus is seen coming tremblingly in behind the couches, and passing along to where, at the right hand of the host, reclines the Lord Jesus. In a moment, His locks and feet are dripping with perfume fit for monarchs; and, bending low upon those wayworn feet, she makes the masses of her own hair drink up the precious drops about to fall from them. Thus she must give voice to her heart. Thus she must give sensible shape to the love and veneration which stir within her.

I cannot but think that this is just what every person who truly loves Christ wishes to do. He is not content with mere possession of the proper feeling: it must have *expression*. The instincts of nature urge him to it. Any genuine emotion naturally hates to remain shut up, voiceless and invisible, in the heart. It is like a bird, which, though born in its cage, will, at sight of green fields and groves, and other birds darting merrily hither and thither, hop uneasily around its narrow circuit, and press itself between the wires, giving touching signs how readily it would, if permitted, go forth into a wider home. The permission may not be granted. The little prisoner may be forced to pass all its life within those jealous gratings. And so emotions may be kept ever concealed in the heart; but their tendency and struggle ever are to come forth into the outward world, to express themselves in act. Thus, if you hate a man, the hatred is ever wanting to go out into acts of injury; and if, on the other hand, you love a man, the love is ever wanting to show itself in acts of benefit. Look up, O soul! Yonder is the Christ whom Mary loved. Do I feel, as she did, a desire to do something naturally expressive of attachment and respect for His cause and person? Do I

sometimes find myself pressed by my heart to seek out, as it were, some alabaster box of ointment, wherewith to anoint my Saviour? Or am I well content to have whatever good emotion toward Him I may possess remain a mere emotion? Let me not deceive myself. That feeling which I have no tendency to express I must not think that I possess. If, under no circumstances, there is a fluttering against the wires of the cage, there is no true bird within it. What seems such, is only a stuffed specimen. It cannot spread a wing, or utter a note.

Further, it seems that Mary was not content with some expression of her feelings toward Christ—she must have the *very highest and best expression possible to her*. She looked around. She thought of pouring, publicly, profuse and precious ointment on the head and feet of Christ, and wiping His feet with her hair. This would be, not merely a real expression of her heart, not merely an expression up to the average of such things among disciples, not merely a very exemplary and remarkable expression, but one which, when made, would enable Christ to say of her, “She hath done what she could.” And this she chose.

Considering who the personage was toward

whom the manifestation was to be made, it is clear that Mary was justified in seeking one of this superlative kind. Nothing can be clearer than that, the more bright and honorable the testimonial of reverent attachment she offered Him, the more suitable that testimonial was. Behold Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever — as deserving of the choicest offering, as deserving of the alabaster box of precious spikenard, as ever! Is it this, that we, professed lovers of Him, are seeking to give Him? Is it our disposition to cast about us to see, not merely what we can do for His honor, but what we can do *most* for His honor? Though gone, Christ is not gone beyond the reach of our offerings. Some of us can bring Him more striking and costly presents than others. But is each in the habit of asking what is the best thing he can bring? Whether in a world where, if we may venture so to speak, Christ needs so much countenancing and helping, he is seeking to do that which shall countenance and help Him the most? I take it for granted that each of us is proposing to do *something* for the honor of the Saviour, because I take it for granted that our profession is not a mere name. But a mere something should not satisfy us. It

will not satisfy Christ. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." Therefore, when we propose to anoint Jesus, we should ask for the richest ointment that our means will enable us to procure. If we can give our three hundred pence, it will dishonor His excellent majesty to pour upon Him an adulterated spike-nard costing but fifty. The inferior portions of our time, the feebler exertions of our faculties, the less valuable of our material possessions—these, the remaining wickedness of our hearts tempts us, (and, oh, how successfully, too often!) to offer to our Master. Instead of going round to the shops of the merchants far and near, with all our disposable gold in our hand, inquiring for some alabaster box "exceeding precious," we too often think of taking the nearest and cheapest aromatic that can be had, and as little of it as will serve to make a show of anointing. Whatever work for Christ has some little sweet scent of faith and love will do: we ask not for one which will fill the whole house with its perfume. Whatever work for Christ has a few drops of

spikenard in it will answer: we ask not for one which can anoint both head and feet so copiously that Mary's luxuriant hair shall be needed to drink up the wasting treasure. Surely that ancient woman of Bethany speaks volumes of reproof to us! To know the best, *and then the best to do*—this is the complete problem which man is set to solve. Mary solved it. When she had inquired, and satisfied herself what would be the most desirable expression of affectionate loyalty, she made it. It was very costly, drew deeply on her slender means. It was an offering in which she could have had little sympathy and encouragement from others: indeed, she had reason to expect what actually happened—that some disciples would look upon her conduct as uncalled for and extravagant. But this did not stop her. Having found out "what she could," she went on to the doing. Having concluded what work in honor of Christ would be the best for her, she undertook whatever discouragements and sacrifices were involved in it. When the time came, she was ready with her precious box; and though astonishment and disapprobation were pictured in the faces of Simon's guests, and though Judas was evidently ready to murmur, "For what pur



pose is this waste?" she poured on the sacred person of her Master, till the house was filled with the odor of the ointment, and it was necessary to wipe His dripping feet with the dishevelled glory of her hair.

When we have come to *know* very well by what outward acts it becomes us to show our regard for Christ, then our duty is not nearly half done. Christians though we are, it is by no means certain that the unfinished duty will ever get any further toward completion. Green trees sometimes fail of bearing fruit; and very excellent knowledge of duty, even in good men, sometimes fails to get as far as the practice. It may seem well on its way, when suddenly it drops into some trap of postponement or forgetfulness which Satan has set for it, and never moves again. Still oftener, perhaps, not even a start is made—the traveler that should be being drugged into slumber and weakness by the cares and even the successes of this world. Everywhere there are ten just views of duty to one performance of it. Sit you down, any one, and put upon paper what particular things you honestly think it desirable you should do in honor of Christ. Make out an honest list, and then as honestly ask respecting each item, "Is it a thing

*done?*" The religious instruction of your family, and systematic effort to draw them to Christ—I see that you have written that down as something which you cannot deny you owe to the Master. Is it a thing *done*—done largely, as Mary poured the spikenard? A liberal almsgiving to promote Christ's cause in the world—I see that you have put this down as something which you cannot deny that you owe to the honor of the Master. Is it a thing *done*—done freely, as Mary poured the spikenard? A diligent seizing of all fit opportunities to recommend Christ and His service to impenitent acquaintances, to heighten the attachment and zeal of believers for Him—I see that you have put this down as something which you cannot deny that you owe to the honor of the Master. Is it a thing *done*—done as generously as Mary poured the spikenard? When this woman of Bethany had concluded what demonstration for Christ's sake it was desirable for her to make, she made it. She turned her perception of duty into the doing of duty. What was the potent alchemy that thus changed silver orthodoxy into golden righteousness? *Devoted love to Christ* was the philosopher's stone that did it. And it can do as much for us—transmuting the precious knowledge

into the more precious practice, removing our duties to Christ out of the region of speculation into that of performance.

"He has done what he could." Suppose I could hear the Master saying this of myself. What unspeakable happiness and honor would it be! And why may I not hear it — now from that proxy of Christ, an enlightened conscience; at the Great Day from Christ Himself? Is it impossible for me to do what I can? To live and die satisfactorily without doing it — *this* is the impossible thing.

"He has done what he could." Few, short, simple words, but having infinite eulogy in them, and worth more to a man than so many scepters. Heart of mine, dost thou not want them? Dost not crave their glorious music in thine ear? Make sure that it is far enough from thee as long as it is doubtful, even to thyself, whether thou hast any real concern for Christ's honor — far from thee as long as thou dost never carefully ask how that honor may be best promoted — far from thee as long as none can by any means make out that thou art doing any thing more to promote it than are Christ's confessed unfriends, not to say enemies — far from thee as long as thou needest to be

*dragged* into every labor in behalf of Christ's cause in which thou dost engage — far from thee as long as thou hast no sacrifices to make for Christ. And it will be nigh thee when thou art like the heart of Harlan Page, when thou deemest it life's business to be Christ's missionary wherever thou art, when it does thee good, like a medicine, to hear that His cause is prospering, when to work for Him is meat and drink and psalms sweetly sounding. Then, O heart, think that thou dost begin to catch from afar the rich tones of One who is on His way to you with the glorious music of, "He has done what he could in the Vineyard."



**WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD.**

**VII.**

**IMPERSONAL WORKERS.**

## **VII. IMPERSONAL WORKERS.**

## IMPERSONAL WORKERS.

A man rises before an assembly, and in strong, articulate speech attempts, on the basis of some Scripture, to convey to them certain religious ideas. Such a man is called a preacher. What is the essential thing in this preaching of his? Evidently, the attempted communication of religious ideas. The dress is nothing. The forms and methods are nothing, apart from the eternal and holy truth which they carry. Indeed, the sounds and words have no natural connection with the ideas they are used to convey—language being a system of perfectly arbitrary signs of thought.

Hence, whatever convey, or, as circumstances are, ought to convey, religious ideas simultaneously to masses of men in a strong and emphatic manner, may very properly be called *preachers*—workers in the vineyard, in the way we call preaching—especially if the means used have as much natural fitness for that purpose as has articulate speech. “Sermons in stones,” says the poet—the



very stones of the field preach. "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake to us; it shall be therefore a witness to you lest ye deny your God," says Joshua to the congregation of Israel — the very stone which He had set up under the oak at Shechem should preach to all beholders fidelity to God. "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare it unto thee," says Job in behalf of his view of God's providence — even these inarticulate things can preach to men on the method of the Divine dealings. "Day unto day utters speech: there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world," says David. Mere light and darkness rolling in endless succession round the world are loud-voiced preachers to all the world of its glorious Maker. This is poetry, it is true; but its substance is prose and fact. These impersonal things convey, or *ought* to convey, simultaneously to multitudes of men great religious principles and facts emphatically and impressively: they have the essence, and perform the duties, of sacred ora-

tors. What if men fail to get the ideas uttered by these speechless preachers — is it, therefore, not a preaching that is going on all around them? Was not Paul preaching while Eutychus was sleeping; and would it not have been a true preaching, and a great one too, had all that Ephesian congregation fallen asleep under it? The world of mankind are asleep. They hear not the loud testimonies, orations, proclamations, in behalf of God and religion, that are uttered by the impersonal objects around. Still these objects are as truly pleading and preaching religion to them — working in the Vineyard — as ever did a preacher in flesh and blood.

Whether men attend, or not, the *material creation* is a perpetual preacher. The earth and over-arching skies, with their crowded wonders of beauty and contrivance, say to that great congregation of millions whose eyes are at this moment turned on them, "Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear! There is a great First Cause. There is no searching of His understanding. His power is a marvel and a miracle. His history exhausts an eternity of the past, and embraces eternities to come. This great Being has given you consciences, and so is pledged in heart and purpose to the side of equity and good-

ness. What are you but merest nothings, and helpless dependents, in the presence of God! Shall you not attend to Him? shall you not worship Him? shall you not fear and love him? shall you not obey His laws as written in your consciences and elsewhere?" This is the preaching. With strong, clear voice Nature keeps it up generation after generation —

"What though in solemn silence all  
Move round this dark terrestrial ball?  
What though no real voice nor sound  
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?  
In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine,  
'The hand that made us is divine.'"

If men are ever found without a God, or without one worthy of the name, it is not the fault of a silent creation, but of a deaf heart. The stars are not dumb; geologic formations are not dumb; the human body "fearfully and wonderfully made" is not dumb; nor is a single one of the uncounted organic forms of brute or vegetable that people the world. In solemn concert, and with mighty distinctness, they pronounce before sage and savage the word *God*. They *preach* of Him, if ever there

was preaching done in human presence. They communicate, or ought to do so, both the idea and the satisfying proof of the being, the attributes and the rights over us, of an infinite Creator.

The next preacher of the impersonal sort, the next in order of time and extent of action, is the *Christian Bible*. How many eyes do you suppose are this moment resting on this Book—in sanctuaries, in homes, in ships, in the hundreds of languages and dialects into which it has been translated? Enough, certainly, to make a vast congregation. And to them all, the Book, as seen and not read—whether resting on the shelf, or the center-table, or the counter, or the pulpit—preaches after this manner: “Religious doctrines and duties are matters of great consequence, else I had never been given. The light of reason and Nature is not enough for your guidance, else my light had never been added. You ought to study me diligently, and practice me carefully. Life and all its concerns must be brought to my standard, judged and shaped by my principles. All worldly maxims and policies must bend to my decisions. There is a revealed religion in the world, a code of laws to be followed, violations of them to be accounted for, responsibilities daily accumulating.

Are you well versed in the doctrines and duties I teach? Do you love them and live by them? What have you done, what are you proposing to do, with my message?" Such is the class of ideas that naturally belong to the sight of a Bible in the case of one who admits it to be a Divine revelation. An intelligent man of this sort, in a thoughtful mood, would, in the presence of the Holy Volume, find such thoughts strongly rising in his mind. In a word, the book preaches to him. He has but to open his ears and attend, and straightway he is conscious of receiving from it, distinct as proclamations, sacred instructions. Some may not hear these distinct utterances: are they, therefore, not made? Some may be sleeping, or attending to other things, while the preaching is going forward, and so not take in the sense of it: is it, therefore, no preaching? Is the thunder no thunder, because I happen to be deaf, or have closed my ears? As your eye falls on the Book, the only idea awakened may be that of a bundle of paper and leather; but it is your own fault if you receive from it so meager a message. It has other messages to deliver: it *is* delivering other messages; delivering them with strong, steady, emphatic voice adapted to penetrate reason's ear to its deepest recesses.

Of old, *experience* has been recognized as a great teacher. Not that it actually enlightens all, but that it might do so if men would only listen, and do justice to their opportunities. Now, this teaching experience becomes in religious matters a preaching one. You have lived in the world so many years. In the course of these years, you have observed and felt a great many things. These observations and feelings, taken together, make a body of experience which has many things to say in regard to religion. It says to you, and to all men who know of it (and who does not, for all have the same), as follows: "Man proposes; but God disposes. The Divinity that shapes your ends through successes and reverses, pleasures and pains, sunshine and storm, is no weak sentimentalist who cannot bear to cut deeply and broadly into tender places in the course of His great surgery. He is not a being to spare the knife and cautery of disappointment, humiliation, bereavement, wearing labor, and carking cares, when there is occasion; nor is He one who will hesitate at any future time to do to you all the severe things that the state of your character and the interests of His kingdom may demand. Look, then, to yourselves and your ways! And

do you not see from the past what a longing, aching, restless nature you have ; how incapable the world is of meeting and filling its wants ; how, if with long arms it could sweep into its bosom all worldly advantages, there would still be left an aching void into which you might cast and lose the whole solar system ? You know, or ought to know, that God and religion are the only satisfying portion of hungry and voracious humanity. Sin you have tasted of, and know it to be bitter. Perhaps you have tasted of goodness, and know it to be sweet. In the course of the fled years, you have learned something worth knowing about that mysterious thing called conscience — how sharply it can on occasion sting a man, and how bravely reward him ; and can thus get some hint of what a calamity it must be for one to be compelled to listen eternally to the upbraidings of his own heart. You have, in the course of these years of observation and experience, discovered something of the desperate wickedness of human nature, or, at least, ought to have done so, and that there is needed some supernatural force to break up its dominion. Is it being broken up ? Are you gaining on it from year to year, or is it gaining on you ?” So *preaches* the

silent current of every man's experience. One does not have to listen very hard to catch all these instructions and exhortations. They are spoken loudly and distinctly. Men who have their ears about them never fail to hear, and think they hear proclamation. If others hear nothing, or hear whispers, it is not because they do not live upon the seashore. Sound away, O great sea! with thy bass-eloquence and voice of many waters: thy thunderous speech is a reality, though he who dwells beside thee scarcely ever notices the familiar sound, and can even sleep soundly amid thy shouting storms.

After six days of labor, your neighbor wakes to see another dawn stealing into his room, and over the landscape. He is in the presence of the Christian Sabbath; and, though he may not think it, the first thing that tenuous, impersonal day does is to exercise upon him the office of a preacher of religion. Shortly he looks out at the window, and sees the sanctuary standing quietly in the holy light, and pointing its tower toward Heaven. He may hear nothing, get no idea save that of a pile of timber and paint disposed with some regularity; yet true it is, that, in the presence of that soulless church-edifice, he is in the presence of a new



Christian preacher, who, all the while he is looking, is loudly addressing him in behalf of religion. A little later, the sound of the church-going bell comes floating abroad over the fields and dwellings, and into his ear. All the idea it actually suggests to him may be that it is nine o'clock of the morning; but this is by no means the only idea it is fitted and powerful to suggest. That pealing bell is a preacher of religion in every house where it is heard; and the man may count himself to have heard already a sermon on Christian institutions before the personal minister has left his home. Further, every person he sees going to the house of God preaches to him; every person he sees returning preaches to him. All these have established religious associations, and point toward religious truths and duties. If one should set himself down to consider the ideas that most naturally connect themselves with the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and their sensible belongings, he would, at once, find himself dealing with the gravest facts of religion, and pressed by them in the most cogent manner. He would hear those impersonal orators preaching to him such words as these: "You have soul-interests to look after: are you looking after them? There are means of goodness and salva-

tion appointed: do you faithfully use these means? Why stand you all the day idle, while other men, not more needy and dependent than yourself, are worshiping their Maker, seeking their Saviour, and making ready for eternity? See you to it, there is a God in the world. Behold, religion is a planted and rooted thing — behold, many of your neighbors and acquaintances have embraced it; and are seeking in it their best pleasures, consolations, and security — behold, now is your sowing-time as well as theirs, and unless, amid your present advantages of Gospel institutions and influences, you bestir yourself to ‘cast in the principal wheat,’ you will at last find yourself starving while others are reaping!” So preach away at the ears of the people all Christian institutions, and all the outward signs of them. They may not preach *into* their ears; for men have the faculty of stopping their ears well-nigh at pleasure. Much more may they fail to preach through the ear into roused and appreciative hearts; for, as men now are, it is often a long and tortuous way from the ear to the understanding, will, and affection. But the preaching is a reality, nevertheless — sounding, sounding forth over hill and dale, into store and workshop and dwelling, like the voice of the muezzin calling

to prayer—and duly heard by many in those moments when the world is still, and reason and reflection unlock the inner ear.

The Gospel is much more largely preached than is generally supposed. You are accustomed to think and to say, that those families around you which never go to the house of God never hear preaching. The more exact statement would be, that they hear no personal preaching—hear not that form of it which God has ordained to emphasize and make productive all other forms. *Everybody* sits under preaching, whether he goes to church or not. Everybody is not only preached to, but preached to with exceeding frequency, and in a great variety of styles. The works of Nature, each after its own manner, cry aloud to him of their Maker, and spare not. The current of experience lifts up its voice against an unsatisfying world, and convicts of sin, of danger, and of avenging conscience. The Bible, though never read, is not silent as it lies on its shelf, or is seen in a neighbor's house. The Sabbath, though never kept, is not silent, as its holy hush weekly steals over the hamlet. The house of God, the pealing bell, the going and coming worshiper, little as they may be regarded, are not dumb in behalf of

God and Jesus and religion, but all lecture and preach, each after its own way of elocution and thought, to every man, woman, and child among us. If they choose to say that the sermons of these impersonal ministers are not true and good, they can do so; if they choose to say that they do not take in the sense of what is said, they can do so; if they choose to say that they do not hear the speaking that is going forward, they can say that: but let them not say that there *is* no such speaking to be heard and understood and estimated. Gospel sermons knock at their ears from morning to night. They may never enter a church; yet they are strongly reasoned and pleaded with, as if from a pulpit. The word "preacher" may be an offense to them; but, go where they will, the functions of a hundred preachers are resolutely exercised upon them. They may never keep the Sabbath; but the Sabbath takes care to keep them—to keep them in an atmosphere of strong-voiced suggestions, appeals, demonstrations, and warnings. And not the Sabbath only, but all days. The least privileged of our citizens are sitting under powerful preaching every day of the week.

The only difference among the impenitent in

regard to preaching is, that, while some reject ninety-nine sorts of preaching, others reject a hundred. All are spoken to incessantly by impersonal ministers from all points of the compass ; in addition, some are spoken to on Sunday by a personal minister. Not a man in all this region who has not neglected or resisted more sermons than he can count. Could they be written out, they would make one of the largest theological libraries ever owned. The archives of a nation as old as the Egyptians would not show a more formidable bulk. And the inference ? I answer with that great, greatest, word "*Accountability.*" Men who have had religion trumpeted to them from every conceivable direction ever since they were born, and are not yet religious, have wonderfully much to answer for. Suppose one of these to at last reach the judgment. Then could the stars, and the flowers, and all between, in uncounted forms, come forward and witness, "For seventy years we preached to him night and day, in every variety of manner and matter — and all without effect." Next could come Experience, testifying, "And I, too, for those many years, preached to him incessantly — and all to no purpose." The Bible could follow, and with it a large company of

Christian institutions, symbols, servitors (headed by the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the pealing bell, the going and coming worshipers), each with its testimony, "And I, too, was his lifelong preacher and chaplain, in season and out of season faithfully proclaiming to him the care of his soul—in vain: he cast my words behind him." Who could bear up against such a host of accusers? Whose fortunes would not go down at the onset of so many damaging testimonies? I read that "to whom much is given, of them shall much be required," and believe that each of us will, at the great day of settlement, have as many heavy accountabilities laid on him as he has had faithful preachers, personal and impersonal. See how the Vineyard, in which so much fruitless work is done, should be profoundly concerned for itself, and proceed to work out its own salvation with fear and trembling! Let it anxiously add itself to that great force of workers, which, under the lead of God, are trying to reclaim it from its dreadful desolations.



**Part Second.**

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**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**I.**

**MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.**



## **I. MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.**

## MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.

THE idea of independence is a favorite one with most men. They wish to be self-contained. They wish to feel perfectly their own masters. As to lying at the mercy of their fellows for their daily bread, or their luxuries, or their good name, or their success in any plan, the thought is irksome to them. So the great struggle of struggling men is to reach an independent position. And if they see a man who appears to have reached that point, and to be able to have most things that men covet, without asking leave of anybody, they pronounce him happy.

But the truth is (and the sooner in life we learn it the better), there is no such thing in the world as absolute independence of our fellows. What men are craving is impossible to be reached. You never yet knew a man who was in *independent circumstances*. Some, perhaps, approach nearer to such a state than others. Some are without particular forms of dependence which annoy others; but, after all, every one leans so extensively and heavily

on his fellow-creatures, that it is almost an abuse of language, even in poetry, to speak of any human being or nation as free and independent. We are propped up on all sides by our fellows. The man who stands altogether on his own feet is yet to be found. Not more really does a statue need the support of a pedestal, and of stony drapery touching that pedestal at many points, than do living men the support of those about them.

Go through the community, and choose out the feeblest person. What do you think of him? Do you imagine that this poor, insignificant man is *so* insignificant as to be unable to do you any injury or any service? Why, this man, inconsiderable as he seems, could lay a hundred hands at once upon you for either good or hurt. If he should set himself to it, he could damage your property, your good name, your friends and friendships — even your life he could sacrifice. To be sure, it might be a costly venture, and bring upon himself evils even greater than he puts upon you; but still, if he should choose, he could take the venture or the ruin, and pierce you like a two-edged sword. And, if so disposed, he could be of no small service to you. He could pray for you after the manner of a righteous man. He could

so warmly and perseveringly speak well of you as to add not a little to your influence. He could give you profitable labor in your hurrying harvest, warn you of the animals that are preying on your cornfield, snatch your child from before the loaded wheel: in a word, if he chooses to be of service to you, he will have many opportunities for it in the course of years.

It is sometimes said that the farmer is the most independent of men. Let us go with one of these self-supporting, self-contained men through a single day, and see to what extent he deserves such epithets. If he is a Christian, we may fairly presume that he begins the day with reading some portion of Holy Scripture, both in his closet and with his family. Who printed for him the book from which he takes so many valuable counsels and comforts? Who typed it, and prepared the paper of it, and translated it from dead languages, and wrote out by the Holy Ghost the first venerable manuscripts? He sits down to his bountiful table. Who reaped that wheat from distant fields of the West, or aided him in reaping it from his own? Who raised and brought to him the tropical coffee and spices? Who fabricated the steel of Sheffield, and plates of Birmingham, and glass of Newcastle which he uses?

He goes to his work in the field. Who made these tools — these plows, these scythes, these spades, these many implements of his calling? He passes to the village in his vehicle. Who made that vehicle and gearing, also those houses and walls on which he looks in pleasure as he passes? He meets an acquaintance, and is gratified by a courteous notice, or is annoyed by uncivil neglect. He takes up the newspaper, and reads with interest what others have done, thought, printed, and brought for him. He carries home his children from the school where others have been giving them valuable knowledge and training; sits with them through the evening amid furniture which others made, by lamp whose fuel others distilled, with books in hand to cheer and instruct him which others have written and printed; and at last goes to rest on a couch whose jointings and weavings no skill of his prepared. He has had his disappointments, he has been defrauded, he has been misrepresented, he has heard displeasing news; and they are his fellows who have pierced as well as helped him. Where is his boasted independence? If it can console him, however, he is allowed to believe that he is acting on others with very much the same potency with which they are acting on him.

So you find every class in society depending on every other class. The poor man lives by the employment furnished by the rich; and the rich preserves and increases his abundance, tills his fields, sails his ships, works his factories, by means of the laboring hands and minds of the poor. The ruler draws his honor, his influence, his emoluments, from the people; while the people draw from the ruler, in return, protection, order, leisure, for their various callings. The scholar gets bread and fame, and high pleasure, from those who read his books and come to his tuition; while those readers and pupils, on their part, get knowledge, and high impulse, and lawful entertainment from their teacher. Actually we are all links in one chain, each one hanging by every other. If we were stripped of every thing save what has come to us solely from ourselves, we should have very little remaining. Even our characters, whether good or bad, would be a mere ruin; for every character that has yet been built up in the world has risen under ten thousand shaping and coloring influences from abroad — from parentage, early education, books, general example, particular companionships. What would become of the mansion which some great proprietor has built for him-

self, if every particle of stone, or wood, or cement, which his own hands did not put in its place were taken away, or if every part into the plan of which entered the thoughts of other people were cut off? Out of the whole great structure, there would be scarcely a molehill of rubbish left. And yet the owner is the true, responsible builder of it, notwithstanding. That it has the shape it has, and the material, and the size, and the arrangement, and the finish — all these matters were finally settled by his free choice. So our characters are so many great and important structures of our own choosing; but other men are largely the designers, the carpenters, the stone-cutters, the masons, the painters, of them. What an astonishing mutual dependence!

Also, in addition to this large dependence on the power and actual doings of our fellows, each of us depends largely on their personal good-will. It is conceivable that a man may have power to do us much good and harm; and that our condition is largely the result of his actual agency, voluntary and involuntary; and that, at the same time, it is possible for us to reach such a *command* of this agency and power as to secure them in our favor, whether we have the good-will of the man or not.

For example, had I the prestige and power and wealth of a king, what would it matter to me whether the man liked or disliked — could I not command his service all the same, simply because I could make it for his interest to serve me? With a plenty of means, could I not command the skill and labor of all the crafts and arts and professions the world over, and have them build and beautify and run for me through the livelong years, even though I were sincerely detested by them all?

It certainly is a matter of experience that you can have many things done for you just as well without the good-will of the doer as with it. At the same time, it is true that the same power and abundance that would purchase you this sort of independence in one direction would rob you of it in another; and that, on coming to sum up and balance the account, you would still find a great dependence standing against you. Whatever the position you succeed in reaching, you will carry with you into it a nature clamorous for the kindly feelings and sympathies of your kind. Their mere hands will not content you. Also, the larger your means of making it for their interest to serve you, the greater the interests staked on their fidelity, the greater, usually, the temptation to swerve from it,



and the greater the number of persons with whose actions your interests will be essentially bound up. And, to a large extent, people are not governed by a sense of interest. Passions and habits, with many, are far more powerful. It is, moreover, out of any man's power to make it always *seem*, if not be, for the interest of others to lend their efforts for his advantage. Can he make it seem for the interest of a wicked man not to rob him of half he is worth, when the law gives him the chance of doing it securely? Do not the interests of different persons very often apparently conflict, so that to do for one will seem to do against another, and perhaps against yourself? No, you cannot possibly disentangle yourself from a very large dependence on the good-will of your fellow-men. If they dislike you, you will have to suffer for it. If they are friendly, you will find your advantage in it. The good-will of even a child is worth something to you, and always will be, should you mount the throne of Christendom. It is a mere *Nobody*, is it, who stands up for you in his low place and wishes you well! Yet, Nobody as he is, in common superficial view, he is doubtless *Somebody* to you. And so closely are the great and the small tied up together in the social system, and so

many and delicate the points of contact between them, that even his smiles and frowns will take effect upon you. And, if it will give you any satisfaction, you are permitted to think that the dependence is not one-sided. Men, from the lowest to the highest, depend on *you* just as you do on them.

*This fact gives every man the right of self-preservation to interfere in the moral condition of his fellow-men.*

If you have so much at stake on the will, actions, and affections of your neighbors, surely they ought not to think it unreasonable, if you show some concern as to what they are and are doing, and take some fitting measures to make their influence on you salutary, instead of pernicious, and, perhaps, destructive. The shortest way of doing this is to make good men of them in the Christian sense, and as thoroughly good men as possible. This will make the general current of their influence on you tend toward God and heaven, in which direction your chief interests lie. This will make them choose to do well by you; this will give you their personal affection; this will go to shape all their words, actions, and even involuntary exhalations of influence, into forms of love and usefulness toward all

mankind. So you have a right to interfere in behalf of their Christian character—the right of self-preservation. Dependent as you are on their power and personal good-will and action, it is a duty you owe to yourself and your family to see that these elements are sanctified. It is as much your business to reason with, and solicit, and warn the impenitent sinners about you, as it is to plow your fields. And for the same reason it is their business to look after your Christian state. It is a matter which nearly concerns them. It would lie as much within their proper province to reprove your backsliding as it would to take a bad stone out of the highway which they are traveling.

*Every community that does not look after the religious condition of its highways and hedges commits a great mistake.*

In every community there are many families in about equally poor condition as to this world and the next—destitute, socially neglected, ignorant, churchless, sabbathless, Godless. These people, with their troops of children growing up to the same hard and wicked lot—has not the Christian portion of the community something to do with them? To say nothing of the value of these immortal souls, are they such mere ciphers in their relation

to the rest of the social body, that they can safely be left to their fate? When strong disease has seized on one of your extremities, you bestir yourself to cure it for the whole body's sake; for you know, that, when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and that, so close are the connections of the parts, it is idle to think of keeping the rest well while any one is sick. Those families of the highways and hedges are the sick parts of the community. They cannot safely be left to their disease. The health of the whole community is being affected. As we have seen, every person within it is dependent on every other person; and even these unhonored extremities of the parish are pushing out their lines of influence in every direction on the public welfare. The Christian public cannot afford to be linked to mortification and death. And, as the diseased member cannot be cut off, the only thing to be done is to set about curing it. If this is neglected, the moral and religious part of the people will soon find, to their cost, that they are not independent, though they find themselves written down so in the Declaration of Independence.

*The great mutual dependence among men places us all under heavy religious responsibility.*

You say you have no influence, perhaps ; but yet you are acting in a thousand ways on all your fellow-creatures away to the world's end. Your immediate neighbors feel your influence the most ; but from them it is propagated, ripple after ripple, through the whole wide ocean of human affairs. It will go to China, and it will go to the judgment-day. Ah, it is no small thing to live as parts of a scheme throughout which are established such close and mighty relations of dependence. Especially in acting so perpetually and universally on the *moral and religious interests* of mankind, how great a responsibility is involved ! If each man stood alone, that destined judgment-seat would be a very different matter. But standing as he does — not a single tree in the midst of the open plain, but a tree in the close forest, with branches interlocked with neighbor-branches and binding and crunching them into shapeliness and strength, or into deformity and sickliness, with every wave of its own motion — standing so, with his example and deeds and words, all working like giants amid a crowd of accountable and immortal beings, is he not occupying a most solemn position ? Let him take heed how he bears himself.

**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**II.**

**LIVING IN VAIN.**

## **II. LIVING IN VAIN.**

## LIVING IN VAIN.

**W**HAT IS IT TO LIVE IN VAIN? If, at the close of life, our having lived has, on the whole, been of great advantage to ourselves and society, we have been very successful persons ; and if, at that close, when the balance is fairly struck, our lives prove to have been of no real use whatever, then we have lived utterly in vain.

Do men ever live in vain — actually throwing life entirely away? No doubt. All persons are doing it who are living impenitently. If they go on as they are now doing, and have ever done, they will find at last that their lives have passed away without, on the whole, any advantage whatever to themselves or society. They have had some enjoyments : they have done some amiable and useful things. But there is a dark side, as well as a bright one, to their lives. Pernicious influences, as well as salutary, have gone from them ; and, on weighing the two classes off against each other at the last mortal moment, it will be found that the men might as well never have been born. More



than this — it will be found that their lives, instead of proving their advantage, have proved their destruction. Yes, every impenitent man makes of his life nothing, and worse than nothing. By giving it, as he does, a character of alienation toward God and His most holy laws, he poisons its influence in all directions. For all God's purposes, and for his own, it is vastly worse than no life at all.

No Christian can, in strictness, be said to have lived altogether in vain. He has used life to gain the seeds of goodness and an eternal Heaven. So it is vastly better for him that he has been born. And it is also vastly better for the general kingdom of God ; for, however wretched and short-coming a Christian he may be in this world, he will, in the endless next, be always radiating nothing but good influences. Still it is true that he may, and often does, get out of *this* life, both for himself and others, just nothing compared with what he might. He gains Heaven, to be sure ; but he might gain a place in Heaven ten thousand times brighter than he actually gains. Instead of one jewel in his crown, there might be an untold number of them ; and, instead of giving out through all eternity the beams of a twinkling star, he might give out those

of a wondrous sun. As to the good he does the public, while in this world, it is often just nothing. His prayers have no faith and earnestness about them ; his efforts for the cause of Christ are nothing ; his struggles in behalf of his own personal piety are nothing ; his example before the world is nothing ; as to what he says and gives and does in behalf of religion, in any direction, we may call it all nothing without violating the common and proper usages of language. It is a sore question to ask, Is society any better off for his living, on the grand whole ? — but when it is asked, and an impartial man looks about him for the materials of an answer, and goes to summing up and balancing influences for and against, and finds himself compelled to include in the estimate the stumbling-block of a lifelong misrepresentation of the Gospel amid multitudes all too ready to seize upon it, he does not see how it is possible to answer favorably. It really seems to him, that, taking day with day, his neighbor does more hurt than good. And, when the neighbor dies, society has no sense of loss, the church of Christ has no sense of loss, nobody has any sense of loss save those whose natural affections are bruised. He is covered out of sight ; and, whatever his tombstone may say of him, truth

says that not one particle of vital force has been subtracted from any general interest by his removal. Write zero over against his memory, and say that this is *charity*.

Sad to say, not a few such lives are found within the Christian Church. Some of them we do not need to examine critically. A single glance is enough to show what they are. They are literally covered with great capital ciphers, which can be read by one running. Others you have to study over with some care before you see that they amount to nothing in the direction of Christian usefulness. The real zero written on them only makes its appearance, like the photographic image, after some pains have been taken to bring it out. Slowly the dreadful *Nothing* darkens out to view. What shall be said to men leading such lives? That they are only having a partial success in life? That their Heaven will be less bright than it ought to be? That it is a pity, that, while going to Heaven, they do not some good by the way? Is *this* the way these men should be talked with? I think not. We call them Christians; but what claims have they to that great name? They are *church-members*: that is all. Evidence of their having the real Christian character is wholly want-

ing. No good fruit on the tree. What right has the tree to think itself good? These men ought, without hesitation, to treat themselves as impenitent sinners. They ought to be treated as such by all who talk with them. They ought to be talked with as if the utterly useless lives they are living, so far as Christ's cause is concerned, are also utterly useless so far as their own private interests are concerned; so that, if they continue as they are, their lives will be in vain in the widest sense — of no advantage, on the whole, either to the public or to themselves. This is the way in which I am about to speak with them. I will set before them the dreadfulness of living in vain *totally* — that living which sacrifices both their neighbors and themselves. This is what they are in danger of. This is what they are on the way to. This is what they are certain of reaching, if they go on as they are now doing.

Hard labor is the fate from which no person has ever been able to make good his escape. And perhaps the hardest labor of all is that of the man, who, with nothing else to do, labors to amuse himself. He may call it pastime and other pleasantly-sounding names, if he chooses; but it is really sore and fatiguing effort. The more accessible pleas-

ures soon pall ; and to furnish others in ever-increasing variety and intensity becomes a great care and tax on the energies. And then he has to contend daily against his conscience, against imaginary evils, against his better instincts, and, probably, before long, against poverty and disease. So all of us, openly or secretly, are busy with severe cares and work.

But there is this difference among the anxious workers : while some are expending their trouble and labor for something, others are expending theirs for nothing. Their great pains for years and years are all wasted. All they do is a thriftless spending for that which is not bread, and does not satisfy ; and their ledger, as God keeps it, shows nothing coming to them at the day of settlement, from any quarter, in return for their exertions. When they die, and God takes out administration on their affairs, it will appear that neither themselves nor the public are at all better off for all the wearing thinking and doing they have been engaged in for, perhaps, forty or seventy years.

But this is scant statement of the commercial evil of living in vain. It is painful labor for *worse than nothing*. It is great labor for great loss. To live to no purpose is to live to very bad purpose, so

far, at least, as one's private interest is concerned — considering that he has a conscience to punish him in this world, and a God to punish him in the next. If we fail to get good out of our lives, we shall not fail to get destruction out of them. The tree that bears no positive fruit cumpers the ground, and feels at last the keen and angry axe driven through its heart. The servant who makes no positive gain out of his talent, being simply unprofitable, shall be cast into outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is not necessary for any one to live in vain. God has made no man for naught; but each and the humblest has his place in the scheme of general utility, which if he occupies according to the measure of his nature, he glorifies God, helps the general public, and heaps up for himself the infinite gains of everlasting life. If he does not make his life turn to very great good purpose, he is wanting to himself. He refuses to do justice to his own useful nature, and to the openings for usefulness furnished by the providence of God. He is a machine of curious and elaborate workmanship both as to body and soul; put together by the Divine Builder for a positive and important purpose of usefulness; and every day God is careful to pro-

vide materials for his machine to work upon, and convert into glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men. Its action for such results is consciously its normal action. We abuse it when we employ it for other purposes, as a man does his costly watch when he uses it to carry the movements of a puppet-show, or to scoop up from beneath his feet, with open case, any specimen of dust that his fancy may prompt him to examine. Conscience and the Bible take care that we know better than to do this. No man so contradicts his nature, and throws away his power and opportunities, without a bitter sense of what he is doing, and of the great good things which he might do in its place. What know we better than that God has forbidden our living in vain? What see we clearer than that God forbids Himself from living in vain; and, in company with holy angels and spirits innumerable on ten thousand glittering summits of being, treads with might and main, and highest joy, the walks of usefulness without end? Even blind and inanimate Nature, in its numberless forms, loudly cries, "*For shame!*" in the vaulted echoing heart of a human good-for-nothing, as bird and tree and grass and water and heat and light, and even the black, shapeless sod beneath his foot, hold true

to their natures and ministry, and refuse to exist in vain. To live to no purpose is to commit a crime.

The ever-present consciousness, perhaps dim, and perhaps clear, that all these hours and days and years, all these faculties and opportunities, are disappearing one after another without our snatching from them, on the whole, one single particle of advantage, either for ourselves or others ; and this while we see not a few about us diligently enriching themselves and society from the flying troop — who shall say that this is not a most unhappy consciousness ? What a thought it must be, as one lies on his death-bed some night, with his eyes closed (and the watcher thinks he is sleeping ; but he will never sleep again), and at last sees life all behind him, and glances solemnly in among the departed years — what a thought it must be that he is looking upon a *lost* life, that those forty or seventy years, with all their opportunities, have come and gone with nothing substantial to show for them ; that God has had no glory, society no elevation, and his own soul no goodness nor salvation, from his career ! What a terrible retrospect ! How the soul must ache back of those dreamy, curtained eyes, as it hears nothing, sees nothing, feels nothing, but “ *Lived in vain ! Lived in*



*vain!*" — spelling the hard words backward and forward, in this light and in that, uttering them over to itself in every variety of solemn tone, unable to tear itself away from the merciless thought that has fastened on it with the talons of a vulture. So he dies. Alas, alas! If you have tears to command, now shed them for the poor man whose wretched living has closed in so wretched a dying, and whose dying has now plunged him among the abysmal penalties of a wasted life. He has gone, leaving behind him an unblessed memory, and a pernicious example—he has gone, carrying that tenacious vulture-thought with him, to meet, without hope, a Judge whose sentence is a foregone conclusion with him who long ago was forewarned that the unprofitable servant would be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Let each professed Christian ask himself a few questions. What do I practically regard as a successful life? Taking the Bible idea of the end of living as my standard, what has my church-life amounted to thus far? Dying now, with mind alert, must I feel that my life has been a failure, and that my two or three scores of years have been so much time thrown away, so far as doing for Christ's cause is concerned, and so far as doing

for myself is concerned? Have I not lived, if not quite, yet *almost*, in vain ; so that I should tremble to close and go to judgment with my life on its present footing? And, if so, when shall I rouse myself to a change — now, soon, at some time, or *never?*



# **WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

## **III.**

### **LIVING TO MINISTER.**

### **III. LIVING TO MINISTER.**

## LIVING TO MINISTER.

ONE has the habit of asking, Who will show me any good, or the habit of asking, To whom can I show any good? He wants to know how he shall manage to receive; or he wants to know how he shall manage to give. He looks on all about him as so many things to be laid under contribution for his advantage; or he looks on them as so many things to the advantage of which he is to contribute as largely as possible.

How *shall I minister?* or how *be ministered unto?* On the basis of these two questions all the world parts into two parties. Do we need ask which of these two parties is the larger?

The larger part of men live for the purpose of being *ministered unto*. If a man is a politician, ten to one it is his habit to ask, not how he may minister to the welfare of the country at large, but how he may make the country, the parties, the measures, minister to his particular profit or aggrandizement. "What is the bearing of that tariff on *me?*" he says. "What capital can *I* make in the

way of emolument, or office, or repute, out of this question of free trade?" he says. If he is an employer, ten to one it is his custom to ask, not at all what may be for the interest of his workmen, either as to amount of wages or of work, but simply how he may serve himself most thoroughly of them at least expense. On the other hand, if he is a workman, many chances to one that the standing question in his mind is just the reverse of this, and that he views his employer and his work merely as the source from which so many dollars and cents may be drawn to himself. His employer is to be faithfully served just so far as may be necessary to keep that source, and other sources like it, open to him in the best degree. He works his full number of hours, perhaps; but is it not because he knows, that, otherwise, he would not long obtain work at all? He does his work skillfully, perhaps; but is it not because he believes that is the way to get, in the end, most esteem and remuneration? If he is a farmer, his views of wages, of crops, of markets, are accustomed, very probably, to take account simply of their bearing on his particular profit, not at all of their bearing on the children of want. Will the poor city needlewomen find their brown-loaf and meal too costly?

Will the naked and the cold, in the coming winter, find the fleece and the fuel beyond their reach? Will those events which raise the price of his land and stock and produce not carry straitness and sorrow into all factories and cities and new settlements? Will the weather that helps his hay or corn not injure that of ten neighbors? Such questions it is not his wont to raise. One sees that his life takes it for granted that he came into the world to be ministered unto, rather than to minister.

Once in a while, we find a different style of man — one who evidently considers it his mission to give, rather than receive. Look at this one in ten, perhaps one in a thousand! Is he the center of the solar system; and do the sun, moon, and stars, as well as every particle of earth-dust, revolve about *him*? He knows better. Among his carings and askings for himself — all very proper in their place — he asks and cares very disinterestedly for others; and his great business is to be of service to them, rather than to make them of service to him. As a citizen, instead of trying to make the parish, the town, the country, of use to him, he tries to make himself of use to them. As a neighbor, instead of being on the alert to serve himself of his neighbors, his alertness is to serve his neighbors of himself. In all the



relations he sustains, his study is to do something for others, rather than to have others do something for him. Have you never heard of such a man? Nay, have you not *seen* him — once in a great while — and thanked God for the strange sight, and thought better of human nature?

This last style of living was grandly exemplified in the person of the Founder of our religion. "For He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." What a life of self-abnegation His was! He sought nothing for Himself while seeking all things for others. He never wrought miracles for Himself while working many for others. He sought not honor from men, nor riches, nor pleasures of any kind, while striving to scatter broadcast through the earth heavenly honors and treasures.

And so it has been with God the Father from the beginning. It is not, and never has been, His problem to get as much out of His creatures as possible, and to give them as little as possible in return. He reverses that problem. He is not wrapped up in self, though that self be the greatest and best of beings; but the royal question ever before His mind is how to be of the greatest service to the greatest number. This is the spring

of all His activity. He does indeed require service from His intelligent creatures ; but it is for their good, not at all for His. His great eternal business is to open sluices from the mighty reservoir of good in Himself to the surrounding creation, down to its minutest member, and away to its furthest border.

This unselfish, outpouring, ministering disposition of Jesus and His Heavenly Father is shared by all the angels and saints that share Heaven with them. Not one of them lives to himself. Every one of them would shrink from the thought of such a life. The unceasing thought that fans the ambrosial air of that cloudless land everywhere with its wing of sunset is the thought of ministering, not of being ministered unto. In this world, the greatly prevailing motto is, Every man for himself, and God above for all. In Heaven, the universal motto is, Every spirit for all the rest, and God above all the same as all.

The earth, however, is far from being destitute of this heavenly spirit. It has overflowed upon us from the sky. Here and there, in human society, a person can be found, who, instead of making it his business to lay all things else under contribution for his advantage, makes it his business to lay him-

self under contribution for the advantage of all things else. The great thing with him is usefulness. He is content to get his good chiefly in the way of doing good. He heads every chapter of his life with the text, Do good to all as you have opportunity — and endeavors to keep to his text. His name is Paul. His name is Harlan Page. His name is John Howard, or John Newton, or Albert Barnes. In fact, his name is that of every devout Christian on earth ; for the Christian spirit is Christ's spirit ; and Christ's spirit is one that aims to minister, rather than to be ministered unto. A Christian is one who has abjured the selfish policy of living — one who, though he is by no means as yet free from selfishness, is enlisted against the principle, both as to heart and will, and makes it his business to crucify it in his life. He has a hard, crooked, selfish nature to conquer : but war is declared ; victories have been won ; and the enemy is already dethroned, and in process of being cast out.

Living for the purpose of being ministered unto, besides not being the style of living practiced by God, and Jesus Christ, and heavenly angels, and true saints whether out of the body or in it, is not the style actually designed and appointed for *any*

being by the Creator. Though it is such a common thing in this world to live selfishly ; though men universally begin their lives on the principle of grasping rather than of giving, of trying to be ministered unto rather than of trying to minister — yet God never proposed, nor is willing, to have a single person act on such principles. He made us all, from the greatest to the least, to act on principles just the reverse. By His express order, we are, without exception, for now and for ever, to act on the principle of ministering. He has taken care to have us well informed on this point, having sent us as many copies of His order as there are consciences and Bibles (not to say Bible-chapters) in the world.

It being true that God never designed that any man should live for the purpose of being ministered unto, it is natural to infer that such a way of living cannot be the one most *comfortable* to the practicer. It certainly is not. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and still more blessed to be always *trying* to give than it is to be always *trying* to receive. A very restless, unsatisfied, diseased state is his who makes himself the center of his world, and does his best to make every thing gravitate toward, and revolve about, that false

center. Selfishness and selfish policies are proverbially very troublesome guests in the bosom. Nothing so frets and wears and enfevers the soul as this making a pivot of itself. It is a great deal more comfortable, and less wearing, to revolve on the everlasting diamond of God and His Cause. Every man's experience can be confidently appealed to in proof of this ; for who has not found, that, the more intensely his selfishness works and schemes, the greater the troublesome unrest of soul ? Benevolence is a principle of altogether another cast. Its activity diffuses a glow of content through the soul. The men who live to minister are the happy men : do not for a moment think them happy who live to be ministered unto.

Men of this last class can also be assured that their uncomfortable style of living has not the advantage even of *securing the ends immediately aimed at* as well as the other would do. This grasping selfishly on all hands, this living to turn others to account, goes to defeat itself. Nature and mankind rebel again this treatment as far as possible, and refuse to be used in the interest of such sweeping and voracious selfishness. The Scripture way of saying this is, He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life, the

same shall save it. He who lays himself out to make all things minister to him shall not succeed in getting ministered unto ; but he who discards self-seeking, as a rule of life, shall find all things conspiring to promote his interest. Thus honor and influence are apt to flee from those who plot and hunt for them, and try to wrest them out of whatever crosses their path. The laws of Nature are stroked across the grain by such persons. Neither God nor man cares to lend a hand in aid of such omnivorous selfishness. But he whose ruling passion is to be useful, and who lays himself out to minister, rather than to be ministered unto, propitiates both. The man who takes care of his neighbors, God and neighbors will take care of. Mute nature and society, and Providence as well, smooth for him their bristling backs of hedge and porcupine : their wishes are prayers and Godspeeds in his behalf.

Living for the purpose of being ministered unto is not the living best fitted to promote the *interests of society*. Such a policy places all who adopt it in mutual antagonism. Each hand stretched out to grasp from others meets a hundred hands stretched out to grasp from it. All is struggle and dissatisfaction. Nobody is trying to help the public ;

nobody is trying to help another ; and so, as a rule, nobody is helped. How different the case, were usefulness the great presiding aspiration and effort of each ! Then all would draw together : the action of none would be counteracted. Each seeking to help everybody, everybody would be helped. On this sort of policy society would prosper like willows by the water-courses. Let every one think, that, like Christ, he has come into the world to minister and not to be ministered unto, and act on the glorious benevolent thought, and straightway he becomes a public benefactor.

And living for the purpose of being ministered unto is not the style of living *to carry into the next world*. If we carry it there, it will ruin that endless world for us. Once fairly within the portals of the Great Future, with the intolerable burden of such principles, our whole immortality will sink to the very bottom, as if with a mill-stone about its neck. No man who knows how to live only on the principle of being ministered unto will be permitted to enter Heaven. Among the hosty inhabitants, from Him on the throne, down through the ranks of angels, to the latest-comer from this world, there is not one whose main wish and study are not to give, rather than to get —

to impart benefits, rather than to receive them. Any different style of character will for ever knock in vain for admission to that unselfish society. "Lord, Lord, open to me." And He will answer from within the closed and bolted door, "Verily, I say to you, I know you not whence you are : depart from me, ye that work iniquity."





**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**IV.**

**OBSTACLES.**

#### **IV. OBSTACLES.**

## OBSTACLES.

**G**OOD-DOING is so fair and noble a thing, that one instinctively asks why more of it is not done ; why, indeed, it is not universally and zealously practiced.

To a certain extent, there are *inabilities*. No given man is qualified by nature and circumstances to do all sorts of good, much less to do good in all sorts of ways. Some cannot prescribe medicine to advantage ; some cannot counsel perplexed senates, nor guide patriot armies ; some cannot preach the Gospel. Many paths of usefulness are closed to every man : either nature has not endowed him with the necessary faculties, or providential circumstances shut him off from the opportunity of using them.

Much good-doing is prevented by *irreligion*. In the form of misanthropy, this wishes ill to everybody, and does ill as it has opportunity. In the form of gross vices and crimes, it deluges society with harm, and is hunted by public opinion and laws as a public calamity. But, whatever the form it assumes, irreligion is a great foe to usefulness.

It makes a man a prayerless being. It makes him selfish. It blinds him to his duties and responsibilities. It hardens his heart, and corrupts his motives. It fills him with the relishes, ambitions, greeds, anxieties, of this world. He is never concerned for the souls of others: he takes no care of his own soul even. He may be friendly, generous, willing to "do a good turn" as opportunity offers; but his life is far from being dedicated to the principle of usefulness. However much good he may do in certain directions, in an impulsive and irregular way, he would be doubly useful, were he a truly converted man — by his example, by his prayers, by his open confession of Christ, by his alms, by his honest sympathy with good causes of every name. Irreligion always faces toward selfishness, instead of toward benevolence.

But Christians are often found sadly wanting in usefulness. What is the matter now? In some cases, *a want of light as to the fact of duty*. The man does not fairly understand that he is bound in conscience to make good-doing a profession; to create by direct effort opportunities for usefulness, as well as faithfully use such as naturally come in his way; to exert himself to send the Gospel to the heathen, and publish it in the new settlements,

and win men to repentance and salvation in his own community. His Christian training has been defective. His eyes have never fairly opened to the Christian principle of sacrifices for the cause of Christ and humanity. He too much considers himself entitled to consult his convenience ; as, perhaps, he remembers that his fathers consulted theirs, and as he observes that most persons about him consult theirs. Not a century ago, most Christians were almost blind to the duty of evangelizing the heathen world : nothing was done, nor was the Church aware that any thing ought to be done. So dark good men have been in the past, and just so dark are some of them to this day. Under cover of such maxims as that "charity begins at home," and that "one must be just before he is generous," and that, "if one does not provide for his own, he denies the faith and is worse than an infidel," a sincere Christian wraps himself up in his private worldly affairs ; is practically a cipher so far as the great religious charities and activities of the day are concerned ; and spends less money, and less time, and less thought, on the great wants and woes of humanity, and the upbuilding of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world, than he does on a single one of many standing luxuries of his household—for example,

his tea, his dessert, or his tobacco. To be sure, it is a plain matter to an honest conscience, when its attention is fairly gained, that such a course is wrong ; but then the attention is so infrequent and superficial, and a low state of religion in the soul breeds so many ingenious sophistries and evasions, that practically the man is blind to his obligation as a doer of good. He does nothing to speak of, and is not troubled by the fact. Were he to see the matter in its true light, he would be shocked at the life he is leading.

But there are many cases in which the trouble does not come so much from want of light as from other causes. Yonder man is as enlightened in regard to his obligations toward the Vineyard as he need be. He knows quite as much about it as the most faithful preaching of the Gospel can tell him. What is the matter? The fact is, contrary to his better judgment and conscience, he has allowed himself to be drawn into such a press of worldly affairs and cares that he has no time nor strength left for planning and executing benevolent Christian labors, nor even for keeping himself tolerably awake to the various needs and opportunities around him. He is overrun with his secularities. He exhausts his faculty of labor and of interest on

his worldly calling. He has such a dreadful industry that he has no time nor force left to bear a hand in the numerous things that have to be done in every community to sustain and advance its religious interests. It is useless to go to him for any benevolent work: you are sure beforehand that he will "have no time;" he never, or next to never, is known to have any. Will he not give something? Nothing adequate, nothing in proportion to his means, nothing but the merest trifle. You know all this in advance, to a dead certainty. It is his way. And yet it would be hasty to say that he is not a Christian, and untrue to say, that, at the bottom of his heart, he is not well aware how a Christian man should demean himself toward the cause of God and humanity. He is too capable and well-instructed a man for that. But say, rather, that his religion is at a low ebb; that his mind is so filled with his worldly pursuits, that his better views and principles are pushed far into the background and obscure corners. He would be a very useful man, were he not so devoted to the world. He has capacity and industry and enterprise and perseverance and substance; but his aggressive and omnipotent business turns them all away from Christ and His cause.



The trouble with others is of a different nature. It is not that they are too busy in their worldly callings (they are sufficiently moderate in this respect); but there is a certain want of the *executive* about them. A habit of indecision, postponement, carelessness, unsystem, follows them into every thing they undertake, among other things into the religious life. They mean well; their desire is to be useful; but their unfortunate traits and habits are against them. Some of them are really good Christians; but they make very poor laborers in the Vineyard. When any thing is to be done, they are not *quite* ready: when they are at last brought to begin, every thing goes on after a desultory and slipshod fashion, and is trusted to the mercy of a thousand accidents. It is their style of character, well understood by all their acquaintances, haunting them in all their undertakings, and obstructing success in all.

The good-doing of others is seriously hindered by their *diffidence*. They are capable, well disposed; but others will answer the purpose better. They are sensitive as to criticism. They distrust their own abilities. They are afraid of failure. So they are kept back from doing much for Christ which they might do well, and even nobly.

Good-doing is also often hindered by *mistakes as to ways and means*. The first thing to be done is to honestly and earnestly intend the good : the next is to choose out the proper ways and means for realizing it. And here it is that we often fail. Does not the father desire the happiness of his child? Yes ; and he seeks the object by the mistaken course of indulgence. Does not that philanthropist desire to be of service to the criminals locked up in our prisons, as well as to humanity at large? Yes ; but he seeks his object by the mistaken course of trying to make prisons such comfortable and beautiful places that desperadoes naturally prefer them to their own cheerless huts and dens, and are tempted to commit crimes in order to settle themselves comfortably in life. Did not the authors of the Poor-Laws in England, at least some of them, really have at heart the welfare of the suffering poor? Yes ; but they sought their end by the mistaken course of making such a formal and reliable provision against the natural consequences of idleness and improvidence and vice as unavoidably increased, to an alarming extent, the pauperism and distress of the country. So good men often make mistakes as to what measures will best promote the cause of religion. They have its interest at heart ;

but, in former times, some of them thought it necessary to persecute in its behalf, to wed the Church to the State, to shape ecclesiastical organizations into monarchical forms ; in short, to do a thousand things which we very clearly see to have been positively prejudicial to Christ's cause. And, to this day, Christians are often making mistakes in the same direction. They mean well : but they locate a mission at one point, and afterward find it would have been better to locate it at another ; they endow an institution or a professorship that turns out never to have been needed, indeed, turns out to be a perpetual fountain of error and corruption to the Church ; they invite Paul to a post which Peter should occupy, and Peter to the place which belongs to Paul ; they dispute with errorists, where they should only pray for them, and merely pray for them when they should also plead with them ; they frequently misjudge as to the best times and places and modes of approaching sinners with the overtures of the Gospel. No small part of the good intended fails in this way. Could the founders of certain universities have foreseen their becoming mothers and nurses of fatal doctrine, could those who endowed many churches in the interest of a pure Gospel for all time have foreseen

their rich funds wrested to the support of another Gospel, they would have thought themselves victims of a sad mistake. Perhaps never men meant better ; but their way of securing the good they had in view actually defeated it. Their money had better have been sunk to the bottom of the seas.

Such are some of the obstacles to good-doing which arise to men from within themselves. There are others which come from *without*.

Suppose a man to have an intense relish for doing good, a very enlightened conscience, a most excellent judgment, a zealous piety, the very best executive traits and habits : still he will find serious obstructions to the carrying-out of his benevolent intentions from providential circumstances and the character and habits of those around him. For aught I know, God Himself may try the faith and firmness of good-doers by directly putting a measure of embarrassing circumstances in their way. At all events, *men* are not slow to provide obstacles of all sorts. "What shall be done?" says some thoughtful and earnest person as he looks about him on some great woe, or wickedness, or want. If he goes to work to meet it, he will find himself constantly dragged upon and checked by the general tone and example about him. Most

persons he sees, meets, talks with, are doing nothing for, and feeling no particular interest in, the enterprise he has undertaken. This fact itself is chilling. Further, very likely, his undertaking is one to the success of which co-operation is essential. He must, in some way, prevail upon others to work with him. And there will be difficulty in this. Some will be busy, some sick, some diffident, some slow of apprehension, some prejudiced ; some, perhaps, actively hostile, even among good men, owing to misunderstandings and differences of judgment. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, "To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." This is an example of what a good-doer must be prepared for. Were not Peter and John good men? And yet, could they have had their way, they would have spoiled that good deed of Mary—that splendid coronation of the Saviour, which has scented with its wonderful sweetness all the after-ages. Good-doers must look for such things, especially in their more comprehensive and important undertakings. They must look for frequent inappreciations, misconstructions, and ingratitude. The tendency of these things is to discourage and abate

effort ; and, doubtless, many a benevolent enterprise has miscarried, wholly or in part, on account of them.

Well, what shall we do? Considering that good-doing is embarrassed by so many and great obstacles, shall we decline undertaking it? Shall we quit it in disgust? Shall we content ourselves with being barren vineyards, leafless and fruitless trees, cumberers of the ground —

“ Whom none can love, whom none can thank,  
Creation's blot, Creation's blank ”?

No ; but let us consider that we shall need to base our benevolent activity on deep and broad principles. It will not answer to base it on natural amiability, on impulses, on love of reputation, on hope of gratitude and fitting returns from our fellow-men. We must go deeper, and build on more solid and reliable principles — on a sense of duty, on the fear of God, on love to man and man's Saviour, on hope of heavenly reward, on a relish for good-doing for its own dear sake. Such foundations as these will stand the strain of all obstacles and discouragements, while feebler ones would be crushed. Many have set out, in some sense, to do good, and then fallen by the way —

soured, discouraged, disappointed. It was because they had not the help of those profounder Christian motives which can wrestle victoriously with all discouragements.

Many and great as the obstacles to good-doing may be, they need not prevent success, and great success, to any one. In one field or another, God has abundant work suited to every man's faculties and circumstances; and He has guaranteed that no hindrance from within or without shall be too much for a fairly-struggling soul.

Hindrances are nothing more than good men have had to meet in every age. The apostles had to meet them: they were met by even that highest worker of all, Jesus. These accomplished so much good in the world, not because their path was without difficulties, but because they bravely faced and vanquished them. The great charities they had in hand had to encounter lukewarmness, misconstructions, indolence, vexatious questioning, suspicions, oppositions, unthankfulness, delayed success. But they trod triumphantly over them all. We can and ought to go after them.

Good-doing would not be as praiseworthy and honorable and divine a thing as it is, were the obstacles fewer and smaller. As matters stand, a

steady, benevolent activity for a lifetime is one of the heroic virtues. There is patience and self-mastery and magnanimity in it. "It is living and winning on the field of battle." Were we charioted along smoothly on the almightiness of God, our benevolent labor would have quite another character.

A life of good-doing is good enough to pay for overcoming many a hard obstacle. We do not fight for nothing. Heaven pours its compensations here and hereafter. There is no life so happy, no death so triumphant, as that of the man who has made good-doing his *business*.





**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**V.**

**ORDER OF CHRISTIAN WORK.**

## **V. ORDER OF CHRISTIAN WORK.**

## ORDER OF CHRISTIAN WORK.

THERE are two classes of men whom the Scriptures will not allow us to call good. One class have no settled maxims of conduct, but follow the impulses and vagrant wishes of the moment. The other class are thoughtful and self-controlled — by no means do all they want to do, or leave the principle that governs them to be decided by the chances of the moment ; but govern themselves by certain deliberately-chosen and standing rules, to which their hourly wishes and caprices are resolutely made to conform. The fault of these men is, not that they are without principles, nor that their principles are not sufficiently fixed (they are sometimes as immovable as the hills), but that their fixed principles are *bad*. Their leading maxims of living come from Satan.

The Christian is sometimes called a man of principle. So he is ; but in this he does not differ from many who are not Christians. He is sometimes called a man of *fixed* principles. So he is ; but in this he does not differ from very many worst

men. The really distinguishing feature of the good man lies in the fact that his fixed principles are *good*. They come from God, instead of Satan: they grow out of that new nature which bases itself on the law of Christ.

Some of these fixed principles, as consciously held by every intelligent Christian, and in the order in which they are held, are as follows

His first principle is to do what is *right*.

What *ought* I to do — this is the supreme question. Such questions as, What will men think of it? Is it profitable? Is it pleasant, or easy, or honorable? he leaves to be considered afterward, if at all. He will travel the path of duty, wherever leading. He will do the right thing, God helping, cost what it may — when the skies smile, and when they frown; when temptation is small, and when it is great; when to do right is as easy as to lift a feather, and when as hard as to lift a cross. It pleases God — that is enough for him. It is bidden in conscience and Scripture — behold the end of the whole matter; it now stands on the most commanding ground possible. At the very setting-out to be a Christian, he said to himself, that, by the grace of God, he would, for the future, be guided by the principles of everlasting rectitude. He would not allow his feet

any longer on crooked paths. That a thing is wrong should be enough to make it detestable. Right should be king. Duty should sit impurpled on her throne, and give him laws. The Ten Commandments, with all their far-reaching implications, should keep the doors of his heart, and admit, or cast out, to the top of their bent. He was not so much of a novice as not to know that the wrong would sometimes, and indeed often, creep through the most jealously-watched gates; but he issued private instructions against them, and even posted on lintel and door-post that all such intruders must get no quarter from the police of the soul, but be indefatigably hunted out and slain, even though found grasping the horns of the altar.

His second principle is to do what will *promote the Cause of Religion*.

Some have maintained, that the end sanctifies the means; that, in the interest of the true church, all kinds of unrighteous measures become righteous; that especially the various species of fraudulent diplomacy, when practiced for the glory of God, lose their native ugliness, and become virtues. But an enlightened Christian will have nothing to do with such doctrine, save to oppose and destroy it. His conscience

is too sound to allow that one may do evil that good may come. Good must come by means of good, or not come at all. While unwilling to do wrong things to help even so great and glorious and essential a cause as that of religion, he is, however, disposed to do every thing short of this. The prosperity of religion, the welfare of Christ's cause, the coming of the kingdom of God in society by the repentance of sinners, and the sanctification of believers — this he feels to be his mission next after doing right. Right is to be sought by all means: the advantage of Christ's Cause is to be sought by all righteous means. These, then, are his two leading principles: first to do right; second to do good — good in that best sense, *religious* good. At the very outset of his life as a good man, he woke up to the fact that the religion of the world is its chief interest; that its comfort, its education, its advance in the arts and sciences, its liberty and good government, are merely secondary things; that all public good will surely and immediately follow public religion, while without it no public good can long continue; that, accordingly, the first thing to be done by every good man, after doing right, is to promote true religion as far as possible. His pious instincts teach him this, if not his philosophy. If

he does not reason it out, he feels it out. So it is a settled principle with him to do what will promote the Cause of religion. His will is bent on this—to have the church of Christ prosper, especially in the place where his lot is cast, and which the Providence of God has specially commended to his Christian interest and effort. He means to pray for it, to give for it, to speak for it, to do for it, as long as he lives. He does not propose to be a drag on Christ's Cause, nor a cipher, but an honest, positive, propelling force, such as good men can be thankful for, and would decidedly miss. He means system; he means thoroughness; he means continuance; he means organized living for Christ: further than this, he means to lay great *stress* on this matter, to demean himself toward the Cause of religion somewhat after the manner of the fathers of the Church, especially the Pilgrim Fathers of the New-England Churches. With these men, their ecclesiastical affairs were their chief affairs. All private concerns were shaped with reference to, and, on occasion, had to give way to, the interests of Christ's Church. There was nothing which those men so much cared to talk and hear about, nothing they were so ready to make sacrifice for. The first maxim of Winthrop and Williams and Eaton,



and their leal-hearted companions, was to do right: their second was to uphold and advance the kingdom of Christ.

The third principle of the good man is to do what is *for the temporal welfare of mankind*.

He wants to prevent and relieve suffering among men. Any fount of sorrow he can dry up, any fount of happiness he can open, he will be glad to expend himself upon in the spirit of a philanthropist. Hence he is a friend to every ameliorating, civilizing, refining agency that can be sent abroad in the world. The education of the people, the inventions and discoveries that promote their comfort, the improvement of government so as to reconcile public order with large individual liberty, the various influences that soften and refine and elevate the tastes and manners of society, he heartily is in favor of. He is pleased to see such things going to every creature. He has adopted every country as his own. He is naturalized by his heart under every government from China to China again. He has taken shares, and made all manner of investments, in every people and nation and kindred and tongue. Their prosperity is his. He is by good-will a citizen of the world. He is an Englishman, a Frenchman, a Turk, a Japanese.

Where is the country that is not his native country? People, perhaps, call him Anglo-Saxon; but he is also a Gaul, a Roman, a Greek, a Scythian, an African — all by that spirit of philanthropy which identifies him with all the races of the world. He loves the welfare of the nation which his country is at war with; also that of those stupid, disagreeable heathen on the other side of the globe. If there is a class of men in whose happiness he is *not* interested, whose misfortunes he does not pity, whose distress he does not wish to relieve, and whose happiness he would not fain make purer and larger, I have yet to learn of it. The kings and scornful great the world over; the mobs and rabbles of mankind; the unlovely in person, manners, and disposition; the criminals in prisons and dungeons and galleys; all political parties; all sects of religionists — he has a heart to feel for them all. It is a settled maxim with him to promote their earthly comfort, of all sorts, as God shall give him opportunity. He does not feel as *much* interested for the temporal happiness of mankind as he does for their religion. It is not worth as much. But, undoubtedly, the happiness of the world is next in value to its goodness; and so the good man considers it, and puts it next in making out his gen-

eral principles of living. First, to do right ; second, to promote the Cause of religion in the world ; third, to further the temporal welfare of mankind — these are his settled principles for the conduct of life, and this the order they hold in his mind.

His fourth principle is to do what is for the temporal welfare of *the nation and local public to which he belongs*.

With the classical nations of antiquity, there were two virtues which eclipsed all others. These were valor, and devotion to country. If a Roman or a Greek loved his country, and, on occasion, could bravely fight and die for it, it was enough to cover a multitude of sins. The Pagan code of virtue did not ask him to be a philanthropist : it thought better of him if he was only a patriot. He should love his own country, and espouse her cause on every occasion. Other countries he need not care for ; and the whole sum of them he should be ready to sacrifice to the aggrandizement of the State, however small, to which he belonged. Mark the difference between Paganism and Christianity, between the good man of Athens and the good man of New York. The latter is a patriot ; but he is a philanthropist still more. He must love his country ; but, when the two come into conflict with

each other, his love of country must yield to his love of mankind. "How preposterous," says Christianity, "that the interests of the little San Marino should be allowed to outweigh in the mind of one of its citizens those of all Italy, much more of all Christendom, much more still of the whole broad, teeming world!" So the Christian says, "I will be a patriot so far as my philanthropy will let me. I will try to further the interests of my country, as far as I can do it consistently with the interests of mankind. When the two mutually conflict, my religion, as well as my common sense, requires me to prefer and serve the greater good." Hence this fourth of his fixed principles, and the fact that it is his *fourth*, instead of his third. When he became a good man, he undertook to love and serve his country, his state, and the local public immediately about him — to do it honestly, to do it on system, to do it as a lifelong work. No man should be able to deny him the credit of public spirit. He would, with God's help, fill the place of an American citizen to the advantage of the whole country, of a townsman to the advantage of the town, of a parishioner to the advantage of the parish. His share of public burdens he would bear. With his estate and words and time and

toil, he would undertake to nourish every sort of public interest. If, like Peter and John, he should be obliged to say, "Silver and gold have I none," he would still go on to say, "but such as I have give I thee." This was his settled purpose. It has held possession of him to this day, though fifty years have passed. On his heart, as well as on his will, it stands engrossed like patents of nobility, and the proclamations of a king.

The fifth principle of the good man is to do what is for the temporal welfare of the *individual*.

The public is worth more than the individual. It were criminal to help a man at the expense of a whole nation, or even of a whole parish. "The good of the many" (say free institutions always, and sometimes institutions that are not free) "must be consulted, rather than the good of the few." Even absolute kings in these days put this principle into the foreground, and admit that they ought to govern, and claim that they do govern, even more successfully than democracies, for the benefit, not of the privileged few, but of the masses. This general principle, which it is now fashionable to admit, the intelligent good man undertakes to practice upon. He wants to do, and his plan is to do, what he consistently can for the temporal wel-

fare of every person about him. As far as he can, he calls people by their proper names, and says, "I will console such an one, I will feed and clothe such an one, I will enlighten and elevate such an one." As a man whose business it is to do good of all kinds, he likes to deal, as far as may be, with individual cases; and he finds it a special gratification of his benevolent heart when he can in person cross the threshold of a given house, and take a given hand into his own, and say, "I have come to help *you*." He has laid down for himself, formally or informally, a law to the effect that he will do good to each unit-man as he has opportunity. At the same time, his principle is to never help one to the injury of two. Let him know that a kindness to A will be a harm to all the other letters of the alphabet, and it will be contrary to his principles to do it. If the case is that of a see-saw, and, while the individual goes up, the public must go down, he is decided what course he will set for himself — he will not allow his feeling for the unit to get the better of his feeling for the whole multiplication-table. There is a sort of good-doing that is hap-hazard. As children throw grain, so blindly and carelessly mere good-nature and softness of heart often throw about their kindnesses,

sometimes to the great damage of the public. The good man whose favors are to be distributed on principle requires himself often to say *No* to one corner of his heart, in order that he may say *Yes* to all the other parts of it. In order that he may spare the country, he will not help his friend. Lest he should injure the town, he will not gratify his neighbor. It is a matter of self-government and principle. He has set himself to have an eye in behalf of all welfares in the Vineyard ; but he has also agreed with himself to set them in their proper order — best, better, good, less good, least good ; and, in case of conflict among them, to choose the greatest good.

**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**VI.**

**STANDING UP FOR JESUS.**



## **VI. STANDING UP FOR JESUS.**

## STANDING UP FOR JESUS.

THERE is one thing which every man can do: *he can stand up for Jesus*. This is Vineyard work of the highest kind.

Every child knows what it is to stand up for a school-fellow; every politician, what it is to stand up for his party; every patriot, what it is to stand up for his country; and every Christian *ought* to know experimentally what it is to stand up for Jesus Christ. It is to openly take His side when He is ill treated, to come up publicly to His aid when adverse men and circumstances press hard on Him and His cause.

When a man comes forth into the midst of a community, and, in the face of all men, takes on himself the Christian profession, *he stands up for Jesus*, especially if that community is largely irreligious.

In some of the earliest parishes of New England, almost every person was professedly religious. We sometimes now hear of a place in which, under some powerful revival, nearly the whole population

have come out on the side of Christ. But such places are rare. A *Christian* community! Why, the epithet is a sharp sarcasm. By far the larger part of the people live in gross neglect of Christ and His laws. They are unwilling to give Him His due of honor, trust, and service; that is to say, He is ill treated, wronged. Some even go so far as to array themselves in positive and active opposition. Now if, while the Saviour is subject to this large injustice and opposition, some man comes boldly out from among companions, and enlists in His service, and, before all neglecters and opposers, puts on His uniform and badge, what is it but *standing up for Jesus?* what is it but practically saying to all those crooked men, "Jesus is worthy of better treatment at your hands. You should not neglect and oppose Him as you do. It is for you to love, trust, and obey Him. I am sorry that I have so long declined this duty and privilege; and I propose, by the grace of God, to keep to it henceforth. I invite you to do as I am doing. And, since it is one of the commands of Him whom I mean to obey that I do what I can to help others to obedience, I pledge against your present treatment of Jesus my efforts of influence and prayer as God shall help me." His example says all this. He

openly espouses Christ's side of the controversy; he formally casts whatever influence belongs to his talents, character, and social position, on Christ's end of the balance: in short, he stands up for Jesus. The more guilty the community, the more noble and conspicuous this opposing example, and the more pointed the rebuke it administers. If the community is some dreadful *Chorazin*, how brightly blazes the torch against the face of the midnight! how shines this protesting "good deed in its naughty world!" how the simple standing becomes the glorious standing of a Christian Champion!

When a man places his family positively and thoroughly on a Christian footing, *he stands up for Jesus*, especially if the habits of surrounding families, and the tendencies of his own family, are largely opposed to such a measure.

It is the duty of every head of a family to set up the whole system of its daily arrangements according to Christian rules. Every day should begin and end with an act of united Christian worship. Every meal should have its Christian thanksgiving. Frequent and familiar instruction should be given to the young in the Christian doctrines and duties; and the matter of a personal religion should be

perseveringly pressed on the conscience of each. Keeping of the sabbath, regular attendance on the sanctuary, the steady use of all the chief means of religious improvement, should be matter of kind but decisive regulation. The settled law of the household should be pointed, not only against all gross vices and crimes, but against bad associates, bad books, and all outward conduct condemned by the Gospel. When this is done, the family is on a positive Christian basis. Things are being crystalized as they should be. Those children trained up in the ways of Christian order and decorum will never depart from them. Such families are the nurseries of the church, and the moral strength of the community. The man who has the resolution and grace to set his family into this Christian order deserves well of the community, of his country, and of future generations. He deserves well of Christ, and Christ thanks him. *He stands up for Jesus*; for he has openly taken the side of Jesus at a point where it is but too common to misuse and sacrifice Him. Do you say it is a *Christian* community in which the man is living? Nevertheless, in the corners and suburbs of it, if not in the very center, are families whose internal economy is altogether on a Pagan footing. The religious interests

of every child and dependent are left to shift for themselves, and travel to heaven or hell as chance may direct. Then see the half-and-half families—families where some positive Christian arrangements and influences are kept up, but where so much is left unmanaged for Christ, that one cannot be disappointed if the Eli-parents find they have Hophnis and Phinehas for children. It is only now and then a family whose whole economy stands squarely and solidly on a Christian basis, and where counsel and authority walk hand in hand toward a comprehensive Christian nurture. The more the pity; for it is the sacrifice of Christ's interest in the rising generation; it is robbing His kingdom, and defeating His atonement in the men and women of twenty years hence. Hence, when a man organizes all the outward of his household into thoroughly Christian forms, his example is a protest against a current injury done to Christ. The more faulty surrounding families in this matter of Christian training, and the stronger the aversion to it within his own family and family connections, the more noble and conspicuous the stand he takes, and the more pointed the rebuke it administers. A noble protestant is he, and one whose high head receives the first and rosiest salutations of the sun, if his well-

ordered family were natively most stiff-necked against Christ, and for many years unbroken to religious restraints; and if, as he looks about him, he can see scarcely a single head of a family to show fellowship with him in this his standing up for Jesus, and to say to him, Brother.

When a man faithfully recommends Christ and His Gospel, in the way of public addresses and private conversations, to the neglecters and opposers of religion, *he stands up for Jesus* — especially if few or none can be found to unite with him in the work, and the people are slow to hear.

Say the season is winter, the hour midnight. Not one sinner in the whole community seems thoughtful; and, like the apostles in the garden, believers are sleeping while Jesus is suffering. Iniquity comes in like a flood: but still example, prayer, and labor, those three mightiers of Zion, are stretched out at full length in the drowsy bowers of the Enchanted Ground. If, now, grace shoots down into some Christian heart (as we have seen a sheaf of sunbeams strike through a rift in dark clouds, and glorify a hand-breadth of ground while all around is dark), and the man rises and shakes himself, and looks about on the desolation with a swelling heart, and then, as God gives him oppor-

tunity, speaks to one and another concerning the great interest, asking, "How is it with thy soul, brother?" and "Can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with thee?" — also in the place of social prayer he has his testimony to utter in behalf of Christ and His salvation to the few who gather — what is this but *standing up for Jesus*? It is openly espousing the side of Christ against the ill-treatment of His friends and foes. It is a manifest coming-up to His help against the neglect and abounding iniquity which grieve the Saviour's heart, frustrate His redemption, and crucify Him afresh. The solitary red beacon shining through the wintry cold and midnight gloom of that backslidden community — what a noble and conspicuous object it is! All the fairer, and more eloquent of protest and invitation and warning, on account of the cold blackness in which it is imbosomed, and against which it contends. Let not this beacon-man fear, lest in the day of recompense, Jesus shall turn from him, saying, "He that was ashamed of Me and My words, of him also is the Son of man ashamed, now that He is come in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels!"

When a man refuses to sink, for the time, the



distinctive Christian character and principles in deference to the worldly circle into which he has happened to fall, *he stands up for Jesus*, especially when that circle is particularly friendly or influential.

There is a much-abused maxim, that, when a man is among Romans, he must do as Romans do. "Yes," says that Christian man whom I have now in my eye, "in certain matters, this is a very proper rule: I will cut my hair and my garments and my food as do the people among whom I live. But, in matters of *religious faith and principle*, the case is different. Here such flexibility would be disgraceful. I have no right to be found in any company where I cannot wear my religion as a sign on my hand, and as a frontlet between my eyes. It is a point of good manners that the company should sink, for the time, its unchristian ways — which are no matter of conscience to it, but even against conscience — in deference to my conscience, rather than that I should sink my conscience to their unchristian ways. These ways of theirs are so many attacks on Christ and His Gospel which forbid them. It is my duty to come to His help with at least the testimony and rebuke of my contrary example. And I will do it. Men must not expect

to see my Christian colors brought down and hidden in compliment to any man, or set of men. If I am not wanted in this or that circle, very well; they can tell me so: but in no circle where I actually go will I consent to cover up, for any time, however short, my Christian uniform out of deference even to Romans." Thus speaks the *man*. And when the course of events finds him living in some Western village whither the Sabbath, and the sanctuary, and Christianized consciences have not yet emigrated, it does not take twenty years for those lax settlers to find that they have a Christian among them — so steadily and unflinchingly does he wear in their presence the sharp contrasts of his own proper character and sentiments. When, in the course of events, he finds himself staying in some friend's family where there is no Christ, no duty, no eternity; where no prayer is offered, no grace said, no Bible read, no usefulness attempted, no Sabbath tolerably kept (unless sleeping, strolling, visiting, reading secular newspapers, talking on whatever secular topic, are consistent with a tolerable keeping of it); where Eugene Sue, and card-playing, and all such things, pass for wholesome recreation — instead of deeming it necessary to fall in gracefully with the ways of these Romans, and

lock up his religion against his departure, as he does his overcoat, he holds quietly and boldly to his own and Christ's principles and modes of living, and consents to be singular in order to be Christian. No, he will not rasp the angles of a really Christian singularity to suit any company. That singularity is a *standing up for Jesus*. It preaches for Him, and contends for Him, in every worldly circle where it lifts its manly front. Nor you nor I doubt that this singular man will hear at last a strong *well done* from Him whose part he has taken in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Has he not a sure and delightful prophecy of that glorious verdict already sounding like heavenly harps through the vaulted halls of his own conscience?

When a man strongly encounters with his lips the more gross verbal and practical assaults on Christ and His laws, *he stands up for Jesus*.

Some cardinal doctrine of the Bible is spoken against in your presence. Perhaps it is the Bible itself and its single Redeemer which you hear denied, argued against, ridiculed, denounced. So far as your forcibly silencing them is concerned, these bitter speakers have a right to utter their dreadful sentiments under the free heavens. But you have also *your* right—a right to display a

banner for the Jesus whom they display banners against. And though, on some occasions, you would deem it wiser to do this in another way, and to express your sense of the emptiness and destructiveness of such sentiments by gravely and silently turning away, yet on this occasion it seems to you that the proper banner is the *spoken word*, and so you stand, and boldly unfurl it for Christ's dear sake. Perhaps it is an argument, perhaps it is the simple expression of your own honest convictions — often more powerful than any argument — perhaps it is the suggestive inquiry whether they have ever asked light from Almighty God on the matters on which they pronounce so confidently, or whether they are now willing to seek the truth through the gate of prayer and repentance, or whether they remember how it was they fell away, step by step, from the common faith of Christendom: whichever it is, you have made your testimony and protest — you have *stood up for Jesus*. Whether all you have said has been in the best judgment, you cannot be sure; but of this you are sure, that, in the honesty of your heart, you have espoused openly the side of the Master when He has been assailed, and that on His record your name is not Meroz, but Naphtali.

But soon you meet another form of sharp assault on Christ. It is not now the bitter word, but the bitter deed. You see before you high-handed violations of the laws and institutions of Christ and common morals. Here is one trampling the Sabbath. Here is one thrilling you with his dreadful oath. Here is one quenching time and eternity in intemperance ; and, perhaps, but a few doors away, the man who is the drunkard-maker. Here at his work is the misleader and corrupter of the young from almost all paths of respectability and virtue. What shall be done ? for that something must be done is a necessity of your aching heart. Shall you make your testimony by gravely turning upon your heel with mingled pity, sorrow, and indignation in your eye — or shall you unfurl for Christ the banner of your entreating, expostulating, warning, rebuking words ? This seems to you a case for the latter style of coming up to the help of the Lord ; and so you come near to the sinner, and, putting your grieved heart into your eyes, say to him, “ *How can you do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?* ” — or, “ *My friend, have you considered what will be the end of such a course as yours ?* ” — or, “ *Is it possible that you are willing to be an acknowledged curse to the community, and live and die an*

object of just abhorrence to both God and man?" It is possible your protest may succeed, and a soul be saved. And it is possible, also, that your words may have no reclaiming or restraining power. In either event, however, you have stood up for Jesus against the workers of iniquity. Jesus said, "Who will stand up for Me?" and you have answered "Lord, *I* will," in the honesty and reverence of your heart. Fear not that a *well-done* is not spoken in Heaven and in the conscience of the sinner. The Lord will remember His friend; and you who at some small sacrifice of feeling, have fought His battles, will sooner or later find Him fighting yours — in life, in death, and in the judgment.



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**VII.**

**BREAKING THE ALABASTER BOX.**



## **VII. BREAKING THE ALABASTER BOX.**

## BREAKING THE ALABASTER BOX.

THE broken alabaster box perfumed not only the whole house where Jesus and His disciples were gathered, but the whole world. The sweetness has remained in the air till now ; and wherever the touching story of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, shall be told, till the end of time, there will the scent of her costly spikenard be perceived and enjoyed by every heart that can appreciate the tender and beautiful in human character and affection. Mary had great cause to love the Saviour. He had forgiven her great sins ; He had been her gentle and patient teacher ; He had condescended to be the family friend ; and He had rescued her only brother Lazarus from the fierce, cold clutches of the grave. She *did* love Him — deeply, fervently. And she could not be satisfied to have the flame pent up in her bosom. She must give it ventilation. The glowing emotion must have some expression in outward act. So she cast about her to see what she could do to best manifest the tender honor in which she held the Saviour. Should she

make Him a gift? If so, it should certainly not be some poor, pitiful matter, the giving of which would cost her little or nothing. It should be something to stretch her little means to the utmost, and smell preciously of sacrifice. At last she found herself in the shop of the apothecary, looking at the snowy whiteness of an alabaster casket which aromatic India had sent laden with still more precious ointment for the use of temples and princes. How delicate and pure! how beautiful and precious! how like Jesus without and within! This she would buy, though it took her little all. And, the next time the Saviour came her way, she gathered courage, and stole in behind the table at which He reclined in the midst of a company, and poured her offering and her heart on His head. The company were surprised. The disciples thought it a sad misapplication of so much money. Judas, particularly, was highly incensed at the extravagance. How much good might have been done to the poor with the three hundred pence that were idly exhaling into the atmosphere! Perhaps poor Mary was at first greatly daunted at the disapprobation expressed in the looks and words of those about her: perhaps she had hoped that her act would even give pleasure to the disciples, if to no

others. But her trouble did not last long. She was dealing with a more enlightened judge of Christian proprieties than was Judas, or any of his better companions. Jesus understood, appreciated, accepted her. And a deep, joyful peace must have settled into her timid heart as she heard Him say, "She hath wrought a good work upon me: verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

The first thing we want is to love and honor Christ in our *hearts*. Human nature is such, that we can come to love and esteem almost any thing, if we resolutely set ourselves to do it. But Christ is so lovely in His life and character; is so greatly our benefactor, and our benefactor in aspiration and effort even more than in fact; and the influences of the Holy Spirit are so freely given to help our hearts in all holy directions—that it ought not to be hard for us to feel toward the Saviour as warmly as Mary did. This is our first want. Within the bosom, and where nothing but the eye of God goes, we need to have the image of Christ enthroned and enshrined. Mary had in her heart only a large degree of that which

is necessary to every person. If you want a fine field of grain, you must begin with having seeds in the ground : if you want the fruits of Christianity in peace, righteousness, and salvation, you must begin with an honest love to the Redeemer beneath the surface.

Just as the seed in the ground, as soon as it is quickened into life, struggles to make its appearance above the surface, so, wherever an honest love to Christ awakens in the heart, it struggles for *some outward manifestation of itself*. It must forthwith try to find some ointment with which to anoint the Saviour. It must find some work to do for Him. It makes the man uneasy till his hands are busy at some enterprise which is adapted to honor Jesus before men. In fact, to this principle of love, the question whether it shall develop itself in appropriate deeds is merely a question whether it shall live or die. It must have liberty, it must have air, it must get ventilation by the fresh breezes of the open field, or there is an end of it. If the springing seed cannot in some way manage to get a shoot above ground, there is no help for it, it must go to decay. Fling open the doors of that cage, or as sure as that struggling bird within, is, by untamable nature, a free rover in grove and sunshine, in heights

and depths of the blue sky, you will soon find it lying lifeless on the floor of its prison. See how it beats itself against the wires ! See how it endeavors to thrust itself between them till its plumage is torn and red ! See how wistfully its little eye turns toward that outer world, where its kind, amid their leafy homes, are singing and gliding in their joy ! I say, Fling open the cage, or you will soon have nothing in it save a poor bird-body, silent, stiff, dead ! So love to Christ must get emancipated into an outward life, or it must die. Its genius is to do and to dare, to fly hither and thither in busy liberty through the outside world for Christ's sake. If any person thinks he has pent up in his breast a strong healthful attachment to Christ which never does any outside work for Him, and never tries to do any, we are bound to tell him that he is surely mistaken. My friend, you are being imposed upon. Satan is putting off upon you a counterfeit. No genuine love to the Saviour would ever consent to lead such a prison-life. No ! it will leave Bethany behind, and will be seen walking with prying eyes the streets of Jerusalem, and at last turning into this bazaar hard by the temple to buy some aromatic to pour on the head of Christ.

Real love must have expression in deeds ; and

strong love must have *strong and public expression*. Nothing less than an alabaster box of precious ointment would satisfy such love as Mary's. Like David, she would not offer to the Lord what cost her nothing. No proper expression of the state of her heart would be made by the common mint, anise, and cumin: she must have the princely luxury of the nard, brought from the ends of the earth, and sweet scented as paradise—no matter if the cost of it should be three hundred pence. And, having secured it, she was not for taking the Saviour at some lonely moment, and then offering her testimonial so that as few as possible might know of it. The essence of her purpose was to *manifest* her attachment to Christ, to visibly honor Him whom so few cared to honor. So she broke her box in presence of a company—really protesting to the eyes of all of them how dear and honorable the Master was to her. Her love was strong; and nothing but a strong and public expression of it would content her. This was nature—just such nature as every disciple has. No one loves Christ much without trying to do much for Him. To recur to our illustration, the large healthful seed or root, full of life and vegetable forces, may be expected to send above the sur-

face a large and thrifty shoot. The large growth outside shows a sound and energetic life at the bottom. There is no telling *what* a given disciple will be led by a fervent attachment to Christ to do in the way of expressing himself; but this we know, that he will not rest till he has found some alabaster box or other to open publicly over the head of that Redeemer whom men at large are so inclined to neglect or oppose. It is as true now as it ever was, that men are known by their fruits; the hearts, by lives; the affections, by deeds. No man when he has lighted a candle puts it under a bushel; but, knowing that the Father in heaven is to be glorified by good works, and wanting to glorify him, he puts the candle on its appropriate candlestick, that all in the house may see the light. And perhaps some poor traveler across the moor, who has lost his way in the pitchy night, may catch the distant twinkling, and so be guided to safety and rest. Who knows? Yes, we must take it as a principle, that the life will be fully as holy as the heart is, and that loving affections will always have a visible outshining of loving deeds. If the problem which is exercising my ingenuity is, How little will the usages of Christian society allow me to do in behalf of Christ and His cause without absolute dis-



honor? how little can I say, how little give, how little countenance show, to religious things, and yet be considered respectable? — I say, if this is my problem, then Mary, sister of Lazarus, and I are two different sorts of characters; and, alas (and the sooner I lay my account with the fact the better) there is no candle of love to Christ shining in my heart!

A spirit of *sacrifice* for Christ is natural to the devoted Christian. He wants to make sacrifices. He is glad of a chance to tax himself somewhat for Christ's sake. If it were allowed him to anoint Christ with threepence, instead of three hundred pence, he would not care for the contemptible privilege. To think of feeling, at the end of life, that Jesus had lived and toiled and wept and died for him, had forborne and interceded and governed for him, and now was about to bring him into an eternal Heaven, and that yet, in a world where so much needed to be done and endured for Christ, he had never willingly undertaken a single piece of real self-denial in His favor, either in the way of work or expense — to think of that would make his heart ache with anticipated shame. "Mary of Bethany, thou couldst have bought some myrrh and frankincense for tenpence, and not felt

the outlay, and the remaining money would have secured thee many a luxury of diet or dress ; but the fact is, thy love to Christ is so great, that to spend for Him is to thee the greatest of all luxuries. Devoted woman, choosing with all thy might the good part which shall not be taken from thee, thou canst afford to be extravagant for Christ. What would be a cross to others is a crown to thee. Thy great love turns sacrifices into a delight." This will be no strange doctrine to the yearning hearts of mothers ; and it ought not to be to any in whose bosom beats a human nature. A disposition to make sacrifices for Christ is the real test of a devoted Christian. Such a man does not consider himself to have proved that a certain duty does not belong to him as soon as he has proved that it will be inconvenient for him to do it. To be sure, it will take some time from his business ; but what of that ? Is he going to adopt the principle of giving to Christ what he cannot use for any thing else ? To be sure, it may weary him somewhat, it being of the nature of work ; but what of that ? Is he going to adopt the principle of getting tired every day for the world's sake, and of getting tired never for Christ's sake ? To be sure, it may cost him some sacrifice of feeling or of money : but

what of that? Is he going to expend for his little luxuries, and nerve himself up to a thousand unpleasant efforts in the line of his worldly calling, and then close his purse, and think it hard to stir hand or foot when Christ bids, "Do as much for me"? God forbid! This loyal Christian holds himself ready to do inconvenient and disagreeable things for that Saviour who has done so many inconvenient and disagreeable things for him. Welcome labors, expenses, endurances! What are they but *his* alabaster box of ointment, very costly, which he is not only willing, but glad, to pour on the head of Christ!

We cannot expect that our well-meant efforts to honor Christ will always meet the approbation of even good and enlightened men. The disciples generally seem to have disapproved of the act of Mary. They thought it was not making the best possible use of the money. Nay, they were quite sure of its being a very gross and censurable misapplication of it. Very excellent men, too, they were, with the exception of Judas — men, also, who had enjoyed great advantages for enlightenment, as the companions of Christ. Had Mary gone to them, and asked their advice before buying the alabaster box, they would have advised

her, by all means, not to think of such a thing: she could make a very much better disposition of her money. So whoever conscientiously sets out to honor Christ will find that his methods will frequently fail to carry the assent of very good men. He must expect it, and not be discouraged by it. He may be in the right, and obtain the Master's approbation notwithstanding. Only let him see to it that his heart is right; that he is honestly following his conscience, and doing his best to have enlightened conscience, and then go modestly but boldly forward. Every man must judge for himself, under sense of responsibility to God. This is Protestantism and New Testament. At the same time, it is equally Protestantism and New Testament that no man has a right to think as he pleases, no right to shut his ear to counsel, no right to refuse weight to the arguments and even opinions of the wise and good. The right of private judgment is not the right to think any thing and every thing that may suit your private convenience, not the right to set the investigations and representations of other men at defiance.

In religious matters, the instincts of right feeling are often wiser than intellect and knowledge. It is not likely that the mind of Mary passed

through a formal process of reasoning establishing the propriety of that particular form of affectionate demonstration which she adopted. She acted rather under the impulse of her *heart*. This pointed to the alabaster box ; and, without taking counsel of moral philosophy and arguing intellect, she went and bought it. She felt it was the thing, and asked no further. And it seems that her instinct, the instinct of a loving heart, was a better guide than Peter's reason and John's three years' curriculum of education at the feet of Christ. The magnetic needle will find the points of the compass for a perplexed traveler sooner than he can reason them out by his science. Let him put the box into its natural horizontal, and see that the needle is free to move on its pivot, and in a moment, by force of natural affinity, and without a single stroke of logic, that wonderful instrument will show him his north and south. He might reach the same result by making a chart of his course for the last few days, or by waiting till evening and studying out the place of the pole star, or by Nautical Almanac and sun put together in laborious computation ; but this little needle, with its unreasoning natural polarity, will point out his way to him in a moment. A sound heart has polar-

ity to truth and duty. It showed Mary where her course lay better than Plato and Aristotle could have done, and at a very great saving of time and trouble. And with her deep, glowing love of the Master within us, we shall have an instinctive sense of what will best please and honor Him, which will serve us better than all the syllogisms that ever were made. It is a great point to know and feel this. The tendency at the present day is to overrate the office of mere understanding in religion. The truth is, that the most narrow minds we can find are amply provided with the means of correct moral decisions, because they include hearts which, if well kept, gravitate toward the truth by the necessity of their nature. Reason is good; but, that it may be turned to good account, it must be under the management of right intentions and affections.

All acceptable Christian works must be built on right affections. To Christ's eyes, all the exceeding beauty of that precious anointing which He received at the hands of Mary, lay in the tender love and admiration which perfumed it. Had He not perceived the sweet scent of these honest feelings in the outward act, He never would have called it a good act. But with their divine

fragrance, sweeter than any perfume-merchant ever vended, stealing like a breath of His own native Heaven upon His inner sense, He sharply rebuked His undiscerning disciples, and promised that the glorious deed of the woman should be remembered as long as the Gospel. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he to Christ. If his outside is beautiful as the day, and yet the within dark and deformed, the man passes for a deformity. You may build up some external deed till you have the glittering proportions of a palace or a temple, whose marble columns and domes invite the admiration of all passers-by ; but if this elegant structure is raised on a foundation of miasmatic swamp, and all the air within reeks with mould and pestilence, Jesus Christ loves not to approach it or look at it. It is a lazaretto. The Saviour requires to see love to Him at the bottom of all our good works. So far as His approbation is concerned, we lose our labor unless we put in this everlasting granite as the foundation of our outward righteousness.

It seems that the propriety of Christian expenses cannot always be determined on the principles of a common utilitarian. "To what purpose is this waste," said the apostles of Christ and the ancestors of Jeremy Bentham. "If the money which

this ointment cost had been given to the poor, some good would have come of it ; but now hundreds of pence are afloat in the air, with no real advantage to anybody. This sweet smell is of no particular use to us (Peter, James, John, and Judas); nor surely is it to the Master. In short, we consider it a waste of money." A somewhat plausible way of talking, but sophistical, notwithstanding. It is true that all things that are proper are, at least, useful ; but it is no narrow and short-reaching view of utility that can safely be relied on to furnish the criterion of propriety. Sometimes so many things need to be taken into account, the eye needs to travel down so far along the chains of causes and effects, that the mind is altogether lost in its attempt to infer the moral character of acts from their bearings on the general welfare. We are obliged to fall back on our moral instincts and revealed law, in order to know what course ought to be taken. I believe that the act of Mary in anointing Christ has, in the long-run, done vastly more good than the giving of its value in money to the poor would have done. But Mary never learned the propriety of the course she took from any calculations of profit and loss. She only followed the impulse of her loving heart. Those complaining



apostles might have gone into the splendid temple, but a short distance from where they were met, and, on the principles of their narrow utilitarianism, brought heavy charges against Solomon and Moses, and so against the God who had directed in what sort of structure and with what sort of service He should be worshiped. "These fairly chiseled and noble granite blocks, these exquisitely-wrought and beautiful columns, this gate of Corinthian brass, these plates of silver and gold and precious woods, wainscoting the Holy of Holies, these utensils of sacrifice, so elaborate and costly—together making a whole far less splendid than was accepted at the hands of Solomon—for what purpose is this waste? Could not these Mosaic rites be performed in a building and with means far plainer and less expensive. Yonder is the sheep-market by Bethesda: why would not such a plain building as that answer for all these religious purposes, as well as this great structure costing a million times as much? Why would it not have been better to invest this extra expense in food for the hungry and clothing for the naked?" So their argument would have fought against God's own direct appointment. The fact is, there is money enough in the world both to build noble churches fittingly

expressive of our sense of the Divine majesty, and also to do for the poor all that ought to be done. The world is really able to open alabaster boxes over Christ, and also give its three hundred pence to the deserving needy. Our Christian lands ought to be all filled with majestic churches and tasteful homes, and, *at the same time*, all deserving want be relieved, and the Gospel sent on a great wave of labor and alms all round the globe.



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**VIII.**

**FORBIDDEN FIELDS.**

## VIII. FORBIDDEN FIELDS.

## FORBIDDEN FIELDS.

PAUL and Timothy were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia." They then " essayed to go into Bithynia ; but the Spirit suffered them not." These particular fields of Christian labor were, for the time, forbidden ground.

Have *we* no forbidden ground? As long as there are so many countries totally unoccupied by the Gospel, as long as there are so many having only a very insufficient culture, as long as there are so many individuals, communities, nations, near and far, on the point of perishing for lack of Christ, every Christian may set it down as certain that there is something for him to do in the Vineyard. At the same time, he needs to take note that there are times when he cannot judiciously press the claims of the Gospel on a given person or even community. Important as souls are, imminent as is their danger, complete as is the salvation offered, he must put forth his effort for them with a wise regard to times and places. It were well to pass

by Proconsular Asia for the present. Bithynia had better, all things considered, not hear the truth just now. The Judsons and the Poors rightly turn their backs on dark Madagascar for still remoter regions; the Smiths and Stoddards rightly skirt, without stopping, dark Algiers and Egypt on their way to Syria and Persia. Just as there are unsuitable times for approaching the sick man on the subject of his disease, the ignorant man on the subject of his ignorance, the poor man on the subject of his want, the bereaved man on the subject of his desolation, so there are times when it is unadvisable to approach the sinner even on so pressing a matter as that of personal religion. There is no proper opening. Unsuitable companions are listening. He has been already urged to the point of soreness and vexation. Some other person can deal more hopefully with his case than yourself. Some other more promising and pressing case calls for your first attention. His mind, for the moment, may be under such a stress of temporal occupation and care, that your appeals will necessarily be thrown away. So he may be to you a Bithynia which is to be passed by for the present; reluctantly indeed, and with the purpose to be on the alert for the first fair opening to your Christian arguments and expostulations.

It is in this fact is found the answer to certain complaints against the friends of religion. In general, the unbeliever is not desirous of being pressed with the claims of an exacting Gospel. He feels relieved, rather than otherwise, when his minister or his Christian neighbor meets him, in company, at the home, or by the way, and parts without referring to his lost condition as a sinner. And yet what is this that I hear an hour afterward! The man has found his worldly companions, and the conversation has turned on the faults of professedly religious men; and now, lo! this very man who secretly rejoiced that you did not assail him with a solemn appeal is heard trying to make capital of the fact against you and religion. 'You did not speak with him about these things. He doubts whether you believe them yourself. If you do, you are a greater sinner than he in allowing any opportunity to pass without an effort to save him. Are you safe — so is he.' So runs the accusation and the argument. Now, I will not say to that accuser that his charge is certainly undeserved. I will by no means guarantee that the neighbor did his duty, or is even a sincere believer at heart: God knows. But this I may safely say, that nothing which has been alleged *necessarily* makes



against him at either of these points. There *is* a time when the Gospel is not to be preached in Bithynia. There are times when it is inopportune and unwise to press a man, even on matters connected with his salvation. How does the sinner know that it was not purely under the influence of this thought that his neighbor kept silence? How does he know that his neighbor was not longing to speak, and on the alert to speak, and that the only reason why he did not speak was the conscientious idea that the time was one of those unsuitable ones, such as Paul met when he was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach in Asia and Bithynia, and that he actually went his way, grieved at heart because it seemed that nothing could then be done to pluck the blazing brand out of the fire? Full well do I know that many a time have I turned sorrowfully away from impenitent dwellings because I had found, as I supposed, no wise opportunity to say those great truths which were needed. I may sometimes have misjudged. What seemed to me a Bithynia may really have been a Macedonia, stretching out its hands, and saying, "Come over and help us." But that there are interdicted Bithynias, even now, is not a disputable matter; nor that the wise man will try to discern both time

and judgment in the enterprise of winning men to Christ.

In judging what times are unsuitable for pressing the claims of the Gospel in a given direction, even the wisest and best men may be at fault. So were Paul and his companions. Twice in succession they mistook. First they judged it best to carry the truth into three provinces on the upper coast of Asia Minor. God had to forbid it. Next they judged it well to go with their message into a certain large inland province. God had to forbid this also. Their opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, the time had not come for them to perform missionary work in either of these districts. Yet Paul was one of the most penetrating and faithful of men. It is to be expected that the most judicious and pious men now will sometimes fall into similar mistakes, both in respect to pressing sinners with the Gospel at inopportune times, and in neglecting to press them at times that are opportune. The latter, however, is the most common error. The friends of Christ oftener see reason to believe that they have been too timid in dealing with the impenitent, rather than too bold; that they have warned and entreated too little, rather than too much. Probably, where we injure

the cause of Christ once by overdoing, we injure it ten times by underdoing. We are apt to take counsel of our indolence, of our timidity, of our business ; in a word, of the ingenious and sophistical Satan in our hearts, rather than of the soul's great need and Christ's dear glory. Let a good man become lean in his goodness, and you will find that his Bithynias have become very numerous, and that there is scarcely a time for conversing with a man on the concerns of his soul which does *not* seem inopportune. Take a man, who, instead of a credible profession of religion, makes an incredible one, and he is just the man to whom all times for pressing the Gospel on the sinner seem unsuitable. He is never ready. There is never a good time. There is this difficulty and that difficulty, this apprehension and that apprehension — his excuses patter on you like rain. His extreme is opposite that of Paul. Paul was disposed to run with the Gospel *before* he was sent: this man refuses to go *after* he is sent. Paul was disposed to enter a province that was shut: this man must needs shut a province that is open, perhaps build around it against himself a Babylonian wall on which twelve chariots can drive abreast. Yet he may preserve through all a certain sort of intel-

lectual honesty : he may really persuade himself that each time of dealing with the sinner, as it presents itself, is inauspicious. But most about him see clearly enough that the fault of his heart sophisticates his understanding, and really utters what to him seem the verdicts of his best judgment.

Now see a great truth. The Holy Spirit stands ready to guide good men as to when and where they shall do Christian work. He says to Paul, "It is not a suitable time for preaching the Gospel either in Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, or Lydia ; nor is the present a proper time for going to the Bithynians. Your work now lies in another direction." See how the Spirit presides over the time and place of Gospel labor ! From this time, at least, the Apostle will know how to bestow himself to the best advantage. Is he perplexed in judging whether it is a fit time to cross over into Philippi with the truth ? Is it hard for him to tell, whether, on the morrow, it will be Christian wisdom for him to set about making Felix tremble in view of the Judgment ? He cannot forget that these are just the questions which the Divine Spirit officially presides over, and has often taken it upon Him to answer. What has the laborer in the Vine-

yard to do but to go to the Vineyard-Master, and ask for directions! "Thou who knewest it was not best for me to carry the word on a certain time to Bithynian Nicæa; thou who didst forbid me to fasten the terrors of the Lord on Ephesian Demetrius and his craftsmen till Greece had been visited; will to-morrow be a suitable time for reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come before the wicked Roman?" Doubtless it was largely because Paul took this course, and took it habitually, that his dealings with men in Christ's behalf were marked by such consummate wisdom and success. And it becomes every man to whom it is daily a question, or to whom it *ought* to be a daily question, "Shall I take this opportunity to speak to A about his soul? Is this a suitable time for warning B that he is getting to be an old man, and has no time to lose? Is it now a promising time for reminding C that it will not profit him if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul? Can I to advantage tell D to-day, that, for all his youthful sallies of folly and sin, God will surely bring him into judgment? — I say, it becomes every person to whom these questions daily belong (and to whom do they not?) to ask whether the Holy Spirit has abdicated His ancient office. We have

seen how apt we are to err in an attempt to solve such inquiries, especially on the side of inaction. Who shall tell us that we may not procure help against our unwise judgments just where the apostle of the Gentiles procured help against his? He taxed his human power of judging — we may do the same. He sought the overruling and instructing of a heavenly wisdom — we may do the same. And it is not too much to hope that the Divine finger which beckoned the apostle to launch his urgent ministry into the Ægean, away from the fanes of Ionia and the populous slopes of Bithynian Olympus, will, in the manner of the modern Providence, beckon us to our points of labor in the Vineyard.



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**IX.**

**TIMES TO KEEP SILENCE.**



## **IX. TIMES TO KEEP SILENCE.**

## TIMES TO KEEP SILENCE.

**G**OD knows how to be silent, as well as how to speak. We stand before Him and listen: we hold our breath, and hush our throbbing hearts, while pressing ear to the best of ear-trumpets. But in vain. Neither from out the blue depths of the sky, nor from the green world, nor from the templed chambers of our own souls, comes any voice that we can recognize as being the voice of God. So it is year after year. And some men complain of the Infinite Silence.

From such a Being we are not surprised to learn that for *us*, also, there is "a time to keep silence." No doubt a wholesome tongue is a tree of life. A word spoken in due season, how good is it—apples of gold in pictures of silver. Many good and great things are done by speech, even to the saving of nations and souls. No more useful instrument than the tongue for working in the Vineyard of God. But this instrument, as well as every other, has to be used with careful regard to times and places. And there are times when it ought not to

be used *at all*. We are to hold our peace, even from good, even from the words whose object is to do good. For hours together, our lips must be set firmly together, like a bolted double gate, and serve as strict jailers to our thoughts, instead of trumpeters. It may be hard sometimes to tell when these times for silence are upon us ; but it is a plain matter that there *are* times when he that refraineth his lips is wise, even though he refrain totally—times when the tongue is quite out of employment, and we must shut down the gate of words as the miller does that of his stream, and suffer nothing to flow out. As days are interspaced with nights, summers with winters, stars with silent leagues of vacancy, so between those speakings of the just which are as choice silver, because so much work in the Vineyard of God, must sometimes be set the Christian grace of silence.

I am almost afraid to say this. Most Christian laborers are very far from needing the caution implied. Their danger lies in just the opposite direction : it is the danger of saying too little for Christ, rather than too much. Still there is, now and then, a person who overdoes in Christian talking, and needs to be reminded, that, even in the field of good-doing, there are times when silence is the most effective tool that can be used.

One of these times is *when silence is necessary repose*.

It is a season of special religious interest in a community. The whole place is shaken. The young Christian sets out to make his tongue do as much work as possible for Christ. Are not souls perishing about him? Are not the laborers few? Is not the cause of Jesus precious, and His wage large, and the field white? So he exhorts in the meeting, and exhorts in the homes, and exhorts by the wayside: it seems almost a waste of time for him to eat or sleep. But tongue and lung soon tire; and the mind, likewise, soon tires of supplying the organs with valuable things to be uttered. His nerves begin to wear: his health suffers. If he does not speedily find a time to be silent, he will speedily find a time to die, or a time to be insane, or a time to be emptied of all force, bodily and mental. He will have to interpose speechless nights between his speaking days; he will have to break up the speaking day itself, here and there, by hours of silence; or, before the revival is through, he will have broken the sixth commandment.

It is the great privilege of Christ's minister to be a professional speaker on matters of religion. But what a mighty charge and responsibility it is!

How much needs to be done in that parish! how many discourses need to be delivered! how many expositions and exhortations uttered in social meetings! how many conversations for Christ carried forward in the scattered households! Such numbers of perishing souls for whom Jesus died, so many breaches and defacements of Christian character to be restored, so much honor needing to be won for the Master, and so many crowns of rejoicing for himself, he feels as if he would like to dispense with silence and rest altogether, and, without any envious breaks, from morning to night, and from night to morning, keep the sacred trumpet at his lips. But are his throat and lungs of iron? Cannot he be eaten up by zeal of the Lord's House, and, by a few months of incessant effort, exhaust all his faculty of labor in this world? He knows it. Unless he finds times to be silent, he will very speedily find time to destroy himself, at least as a working-man. So, much against his will, he consents to have, like other men, his day-moments of speechless relaxation, his nights of speechless slumber, his weekly sabbath, and perhaps his sabbath of weeks, when he lays aside the pleadings and teachings of a Christian herald, that he may resume them with greater vigor.

Another time to be silent is, *the time needed for the direct cultivation of personal piety.*

Speaking for Christ, in connection with other things, may be a great means of grace to the speaker ; but it is far from being so when taken by itself. We must be much in our closets. We must read and ponder the Bible much. We must give ourselves to meditation as well as reading. All with direct reference to the cultivation of personal piety. Otherwise that piety will fall into arrears. Otherwise it will take a dreadful consumption, despite incessant work in the Vineyard. So the Bible requires every man to take time for private prayer, private study of the Scriptures, private meditation. These are the things that fill the lamp with oil. They are indispensable for maintaining a Christian frame of mind. Men have been known to sacrifice their closets to the public, to lay out so much time and strength in talking religion to their fellow-men, that they had but little left for talking with God and themselves. While busy in kindling fires on the hearths of other people, they have suffered the fire on their own hearths to nearly go out. Look to this, all you who labor in the Vineyard ! See that you keep your capital

good. Do not have it to say of your spiritual life, "While thy servant was busy here and there, it was gone." You have no right to neglect your own heart for the sake of any good doing under the sun. That is *your* field, to be attended to before every other. You must not stir one inch beyond it, until its regular spiritual culture is well set up. What you can do after your closet has been well looked after—that is your duty to the public. Besides, you cannot work for that public to advantage in any other way. You must keep your lamp in good order, if you would have it give light far and wide. See that your tools are kept sharp, if you would have your work well done. Do as the athlete does, who, by a careful personal regimen, keeps up the health and strength with which his victories must be won. If you allow yourself to run down spiritually, little good will do the running of your tongue, or the running of your feet, for Christ.

Another time to keep silence is *the time needed to acquire the materials of useful speaking.*

When one has taken out from his day a certain time for direct cultivation of personal piety, he needs to add to it a certain other time. That we may communicate, we must first possess. A

charitable man has to precede his times of giving with his times of getting. The atmosphere can only send down upon us the sounding and refreshing showers after it has been for a time quietly drawing up the waters into its bosom from the scattered rivers and lakes and oceans. So, before we can give out valuable things through speech, we must go through a process of receiving. This process is commonly and necessarily a silent one. We must silently read, silently hear, silently reflect, and privately pray, with reference to getting the means of successful Christian labor. By far the greatest of these means is the Divine blessing on what we do. Nothing we do will succeed without this. It is the swift undercurrent that carries along all our ships to victory. To get it, we must pray for it liberally in our closets. Next we must commune with our own heart, and be still, asking after our past with its many indiscretions, mistakes, and neglects as to Christian work; and planning for our future that it may be wiser and better; and so not only keeping up and improving that Christian spirit without which all fruit for Christ soon becomes shrunken and ill-flavored, but informing the conscience, and enlarging our fidelity and skill for working in the Vineyard.



The time thus spent in taking lessons from our own experience is time saved for Christ. We need to keep advised of the religious needs of the world, of what is being done to meet them, and of the best ways of meeting them, as shown in the experience of other Christian laborers. We need to be stimulated by bright examples. So we need to read such lives as those of Mary Lyon and Harlan Page, such periodicals as *Missionary Boards* issue, such helps for understanding and defending the Bible as learned men have written. Thus we must gather the material for usefully speaking to our own families, in Sunday schools, at the conference meetings, by the wayside with the ignorant and indifferent and unbelieving and opposers of religion. Withdrawn into our homes, unspeaking and unspoken to, we thus quietly let down our buckets into the great reservoirs of truth and fact and Christian forces, and fill our minds with things that are worth the saying, and with deeds that are worth the doing. Without this preparatory silent work, the good man deals tyrannically with himself. He requires the Israelite to make brick without straw. He asks his fire to burn without fuel, his lamp to shine without oil, his ox to plow without food. He asks his tongue

to be always saying good and wise things without keeping up the stock of rich thoughts and facts from which the supplies must be drawn.

Every man has a tongue that can do good service in the cause of religion. Religion claims his tongue as well as his hands. In his sphere he is bound to make the most of his *speaking* faculty, as well as other faculties, in the work of doing good. But, that he may do this, it is as necessary for him to have his times of thoughtful and learning silence and empowering prayer, as it is for the farms to have times of rest and feeding and basking in the sun, that they may do the best by us in the way of crops. Of course, one may go too far in this direction — may spend so much time and strength in getting ready to work, that none is left for the work itself. This is sometimes done. But there is a just mean, which those seeking can find. Your minister thinks he has found it, justifying himself in spending a certain large part of each day in the voiceless life of a hermit, though it be true that men all around are in a perishing condition, and, if not helped soon, will be helped never. He can accomplish more for the community at large by being totally silent two-thirds of the time than he can by speaking

all the time. He knows, that, unless Heaven should favor him with a miracle, he can have suitable materials for his ministry in no other way. The wise man means Timothy, beyond all other men, when he says, *A time to be silent.*

Another time to be silent is *the time for other Christian work.*

It is true that Christian speaking is Christian work ; but it is common to make a distinction between words and actions, applying the latter term to all forms of outward effort besides speaking. Now, religion requires of us the consecration of the whole man—not merely the tongue, but also the hands, the feet, and every organ and faculty that can be made to do work in behalf of truth and righteousness. The man who is bound to speak in behalf of these things is always bound to do a good many other things in behalf of them. He is bound to give money for them ; and that he may give, as well as provide for his own, he must ordinarily be diligent in cultivating the soil, or trading, or manufacturing, or plying some other secular calling. He is bound to give for them an extensive example of silent good deeds in the relations of citizen, father, husband, child, Christian professor—relations which require him to

watch, to write, to listen, to buy, to travel, to govern, to build, to keep accounts, to do a thousand outward works every day. All these things are Scripturally required of him as parts of a good example, as so many means of exerting a good influence, and furthering religion — required of him just as truly as is that wholesome tongue which is a tree of life. These Christian works cannot always be kept going forward together. For the proper performance of many of them, the man must seal his lips, for the time, even from good. When his duty as a giver calls him to plow and sow his field, he must leave his Christian exhortations for the silent work on his acres. When his duty as a citizen calls him to the ballot-box, he must leave his Christian words to do his silent Christian suffrage. No one form of Christian work must be allowed to trench on the time of another.

Another time to be silent is *when the best we can say will do no good, or will even do hurt.*

Cases of this kind are by no means uncommon. The man before you is a person to be spoken to morally and religiously, or not at all. But what if enough, and more than enough, has been already said to him on these matters! Anxious friends and neighbors have already overdone with their

counsels and pressure, till his mind is too sore and repugnant to hear any thing further with advantage. What if you are not the person to say what needs to be said? You may be able to speak the truth very judiciously and eloquently; but still he has conceived such a prejudice against you, and is so pledged to stubbornness against whatever you advocate, that no words of yours will at present take effect upon him. Another person is the man to present the truth. Nothing is left you but silence. What if the presence of a third party will nullify your words by rousing pride and shame, and love of bad consistency? In most cases, when a man has at his side a sneering, godless companion, whose general influence over him is considerable, and of whose ridicule he stands in fear, it is useless to make to him any direct religious appeal. At present, nothing is left you but silence. At some future time, perhaps, you may go and "tell him his fault in religion between thee and him alone," and do it successfully. What if he is an amateur disputer and caviller, refusing to do any thing but theorize and argue, and evidently doing that insincerely, and with an opposition grounded not in the reason, but in the heart! Can you dispute such a man into the kingdom of God? Your arguments

are all thrown away. You can do nothing for him till he is willing to hear another sort of speaking. At present, nothing is left you but silence. Do not give him your pearls. To what purpose is such waste? What if the case is one in which either your neighbor or yourself is on the verge of passion? Something has gone wrong with him; his irritable and explosive nature is just ready to break out on the first object that shows itself, especially if it come, as religion always must, with the aspect of an accuser. Or it is yourself who is on the eve of an outburst. Under great provocation, such as all will sometimes have who labor much with unreasonable and wicked men, you feel your sensitive and naturally stormy nature just on the brink of a great wrath. What shall you do? Do as Jesus bid His disciples do when once they came to Him with the news that the Pharisees were "offended after they heard this saying." "Let them alone," said He. Do as Jesus Himself did in the presence of the angry men who pretended to give Him a trial. "He answered nothing." Copy this example. Press your lips together firmly. Say not a word yourself; invite not a word from your inflamed neighbor. If a drop of water finds its way through the embankment, a cataract will follow.

The passion will gush headlong, and things be said and done for lasting regrets. In nine cases out of ten, a blaze of wrath must be treated like a blaze of fire in our dwelling. How do we when we find a room on fire? Do we raise a window never so little? Our first and instant thought is to cut off all communication with the outer air. Every open door is hastily shut: every raised window is swiftly brought down: not a breath of air shall that rising flame have if it is possible to prevent it. You that are rushing in with water and wet blankets, see that you crowd in by the smallest opening, and promptly put to the door behind you. Now spread on your wet covers in an instant; cover the flame completely up, as if it were an ague; leave it not a single breathing-place. The fire is out, fairly stifled. Here are a few white ashes, and some black char; but, friend, had that flame been allowed an open casement, and a taste of the brisk outside air, we should by this time have been an awful lighthouse. See here the way of treating a blaze of wrath. Give it no vent, not even that of a single word. The wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment: in the spirit of such a man put off your Christian talking till the storm is over.

WORK IN THE VINEYARD.

X.

SEND BY WHOM THOU WILT  
SEND.



**X. SEND BY WHOM THOU WILT  
SEND.**

## SEND BY WHOM THOU WILT SEND.

**I**N ancient times, God often laid duties on men with an audible Divine voice. We have many instances of this in the career of Moses. One of the most remarkable of these was when, from the midst of the burning bush, came forth to him the command to go down into Egypt, and bring up thence oppressed Israel. As Moses' outward eye dazzled with that flame, and as his outward ear echoed with those awful tones, there could have been no doubt in his mind that God had laid upon him the duty of casting aside the crook of the shepherd for the rod of the prophet and the sword of the commander.

It was the plainest of facts. And yet not more plainly was Moses called of God to go down into Egypt than are we to do various things which can be mentioned. A voice from Heaven would not make it more certain than it is that we are Divinely required to cherish certain feelings, and prosecute certain enterprises. We have the letter written with God's own finger, if not the words uttered

with God's own voice. We have God's voice in the heart, if not God's voice in the ear. These, singly or together, assign us very many duties with a clearness and authority which are perfect. For example: to love God supremely, and my fellows disinterestedly; to be grateful for blessings, and patient under trials; to be studious to know what is duty, and on my guard against temptations to swerve from it when known; to make myself as useful as possible in my sphere, and to be sorry for all my shortcomings in this respect and in others — such duties could not be any better authenticated to me, were the dead to arise, or the heavens descend, to proclaim them. I cannot conceive of their coming to me with any clearer warrant than they possess already. Besides these assured duties, are multitudes of others resting on such sound and plentiful probabilities as bind the conscience as strongly as sheer demonstration could do. I am as much bound to proceed on the idea that they are put on me by God, as Moses was to go down into Egypt after these words had come to him out of the flaming bush, "Come now, I will send thee unto Pharaoh."

Among the duties laid upon us, there are some which are naturally agreeable. For the pleasure

they afford we would do them, though they were not duties. The food, which we are bound to take for the support of life, is palatable. The medicine for our sickness, which we would not be justified in refusing, is sometimes sweet to the taste. The journey which a proper regard to your health requires you to undertake is found delightful with its novel and brilliant pictures of scenery and manners. To love your friends, to labor for the comfort and improvement of your children, to lay up knowledge, to rest your wearied body on the sabbath — such things are what you ought to do, and they are also things which you are pleased to do. Were all our duties of this class, they would not so often ask in vain for performance.

But they are not. A large portion of the things God requires of us are like that journey into Egypt which He required of Moses. Moses was reluctant to undertake it. He imagined himself unequal to it: his speech was defective. How should *he* persuade Pharaoh to let the people go? And then he had been forty years in Midian: was rooted there by his occupation, his family, his property, and his age; for he was now eighty years old. At his time of life to break up his home, and enter on altogether a new career, to

exchange the quiet of a pastoral life for the bustle and cares of camps and government, seemed a most formidable undertaking. When, nearly a half-century before, he had ventured some interference in behalf of his brethren, they had received his advances with disfavor, though he was then great and powerful : was he likely to meet with any better success after having been out of sight and out of mind for so long a time? He had left Egypt to save his life from the Egyptians, was there not danger, extreme danger, in returning to them unbidden, and for a purpose than which none could be more distasteful to them — that of depriving them of their slaves? So it was an unpleasant duty to which Moses found himself called. Doubtless, it was not the first of the class he had met with, nor was it, by any means, the last. For the next forty years, he was made to walk hard paths largely. He did not escape work that was as uninviting as the desert through which he wandered, as dark featured as the Ethiopia whose afflictive sun smote up from surrounding sands.

Nor can we. God is not more careful to consult our corrupt tastes in the work He assigns than He was those of Moses. He asks what is best to be done, not what we choose to do. In consequence

of the weakness, blindness, and sinfulness of our natures, these two things are often far from being identical. Often, the worst course is, for the time being, the easiest for us. What, to our short-sightedness, is fair and promising, often appears to Him, who sees to the bottom of things, full of evil. Our fallen hearts are prone to love what they should hate, and to hate what they should love. So, by the side of the agreeable duties which our consciences and the Scriptures lay upon us, are many which are like the coarse, dry fare on which the diseased epicure is made to live till his abused system recovers its tone ; and some which are even like the amputating knife, threatening the limb which mortification has already begun to discolor.

Take, for example, a very great generic duty resting on us all. In her times of declension, Zion is Scripturally said to be "in captivity in a strange land." Sin itself is called a "bondage." Sinners are "captives of Satan at his will." Hence the world itself, which lies in wickedness still, is a bondman in an Egypt of darkness and condemnation. Now, God would fain bring up each languishing church out of her house of bondage. He wishes to emancipate the whole race from taskmasters worse than the Pharaohs, and conduct

them into the promised land of the Millennium. The church, the world, have ground in their prison long enough. God has seen their affliction, and heard their cry, and is come down to deliver them. He is calling for instruments ; and surely I hear him saying to each of us, "Come now, I will send *thee* into Egypt." No bush blazes, and sends out majestic voices ; and yet I am persuaded that I hear it said to you and to me, in Divine tones as well authenticated as Moses heard in Horeb, "Come now forthwith into Egypt. Bring my people up from thence. Deliver thy neighbor. Set thyself to recover my church from its depressed condition. See the darkness that covers the earth, and thick darkness the people, and set thyself to deliver thy oppressed and benighted brethren of the human family." Are not these the words, O listening Conscience ! O Holy Scriptures ! are not these the words that echo from the hoary summits, and green hillsides, and flowery vales, and burning bushes, of your everlasting truth ? In the great law of love, God charges every man to do what he can toward delivering every other out of his Egypts, whatever they may be. None may withhold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of their hand to

do it. If your church is the needy party, and groans in her house of bondage, then, as there is not one member who cannot do *something* towards opening her prison-doors, there is not one on whom the obligation of doing for that end does not rest. Consider the race as the party that requires aid, while, under the Pharaohs of sin and condemnation, it makes bricks without straw ; then, as there is not one of us, however limited his power, who cannot do *something* towards drying up that Red Sea which hinders the deliverance, there is not one on whom the duty of lifting his rod over the waters does not bear.

In general, however, it is not an inviting duty. We dread to go down into Egypt quite as much as Moses did. The world must be reclaimed by prayers and alms and personal religious labor. Some of us find prayer irksome — perhaps the most irksome of all employment. Some of us are too much set on gain to find it easy to open our purses widely for the spread of the Gospel. That the church may come up out of the dust and prosper, there should be family prayer in your house and mine, there should be public prayer and address on your part and on mine, men should be religiously conversed with, iniquity should be re-



buked, the careless menaced with the terrors of the Lord, backsliders admonished and entreated, the young restrained and instructed. But to use these means of the church's exodus from her house of bondage we are exceedingly backward. Perhaps we are ready to plead incompetency. We are slow of speech, or ungracious of manner, or defective in education, or narrow in capacity, or weak in piety, or quite without piety. With such a sense of inadequacy, Moses shrinks from going before Pharaoh. Perhaps we have the pressure of business to plead, leaving us too little time for the religious efforts of various kinds which naturally introduce a revival of religion. Moses cannot go to the help of his brethren: he has his family to look after, and his flocks to tend. Perhaps we fear that our forwardness in Israel's behalf will be unacceptable to Israel, lest one and another should say, "Ye take too much upon yourselves," and look askance upon our exhortations and urging Christian labor as so much Pharisaism and ambition only. Moses is by no means sure that the bondmen will welcome his interference in their behalf. They have counted his interference officious once — why may they not do it again? Perhaps we are too fond of our ease. There are cares and hard work in every

step toward the moral upbuilding of a community. Perhaps we shrink from the sacrifice of our quiet and comfort on this altar, just as Moses may be supposed to have shrunk from exchanging his pastoral life in Midian for the wearing cares and exertions of a mission into Egypt. For this cause or for that, the commission which God has given us to labor for the deliverance of Zion from her spiritual captivity is apt to be met with reluctance. For this cause or for that, when God calls us to go forth to the work of manumitting the world from the yoke of Sin and Satan, those hardest of Pharaohs and taskmasters, we are apt to be far from ready to meet the call with a prompt and cheerful obedience. It is a most honorable mission; but we have too much Egypt in *ourselves* to relish the employment. Heaven could not assign us a nobler and more recompensing work; but our ambition and covetousness are slow to take such a direction. We had rather watch our flocks on the sides of Horeb than become agitators, and busy ourselves with breaking chains and easing burdens on the banks of the Nile. We are not unwilling that the deliverance should take place, perhaps — possibly it would give us great pleasure to see an emancipated church and world turning their backs on

Satan's unfinished pyramids, and going forth with streaming banners into God's Holy Land, goodly and large — and, if our mere suffrage could bring about such a result, there might be the very promptest showing of hands. But to deny ourselves for this object, to spend time for it which might be used in private worldly business, to give freely of our substance for it, to sacrifice for it our timidity, our love of ease, and all the remaining carnality of our minds, is a task from which we shrink as does some close-kept body from going forth into the cold of a winter's day. Had Moses merely been asked to approve of the exodus of his brethren, would he have been slow to do it? "By all means," he would have been ready to exclaim — "by all means, let them come forth from the house of bondage. That will be an auspicious day — the last they shall spend in Egypt. With all my heart I shall rejoice to see the prison-gates thrown open, and the unfettered tribes going out to the heritage which thou gavest to Abraham and his seed." But when he was asked to be the *instrument* of the deliverance, then poor human nature drew back. So we, if called upon, could give freest assent to the church's revival and the world's conversion. "Let the heathen

be evangelized," we could say — "by all means let Paganism and Mohammedanism and Romanism everywhere give place to a pure and living Christianity. We shall be heartily glad to see the emancipation involved in such a change. And as to this particular church — why, let *that* flourish like a palm. Let all its weakness and depression disappear. Let it be emancipated from all apostasies, backslidings, lukewarmness, and get firmest establishment in that high grace and favor with God which is a land flowing with milk and honey. We shall be glad to see Zion fairly out of her Egypt." But when we are called upon to be *instruments* of the deliverance, to give time and substance and hard work till Sin and Satan are forced to let the people go, then our fallen natures are prone to hang back — as does the traveler from the touch of the cold winter stream which his course requires him to ford.

Agreeable duties we take promptly upon ourselves. We are bound to love our friends: none of us, if we could, would get his neighbors to do this duty for him. A thousand offices for the good of the child which the tenderness of the parents prompts them to undertake, they are bound to undertake. They would no more think of putting

off these duties on other persons, if the thing were possible, than a hungry man would think of getting another to do his eating for him, or a weary man another to do his resting for him, if that could be.

It ought to be so in respect to all the work God lays upon us. Every man should be ready to do for himself his own duties. But let the duties be of the unpleasant sort, and how apt we are to seek for proxies! As soon as we understand that there is unpopularity, or pecuniary sacrifice, or danger, or hard work, in them, we naturally look about for some one to carry our cross. This was what Moses did. "Come now, and I will send thee into Egypt," said God to him out of the burning bush. Instead of accepting the mission without hesitation, he must needs try if he could not put it off on some one else. "O my Lord! send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send." He did not care who was employed, provided it was not himself. Let Aaron go, or Hur, or Jethro — any one whom God sees fit — only let himself be spared. He has not the heart to say a word against the thing to be done, only he does not want the doing of it. It is a blessed enterprise, but let some other agent be found. God forbid that we should utter a sylla-

ble against the coming of the kingdom of God in the world! Let there be a religious revival here; let there be such everywhere. The sooner Pharaoh loses the church and the world as bondmen, the better. But when God speaks to each of us out of the Scriptures, and out of our own hearts, saying, "Come now, and I will send *thee* into Egypt to aid in this good work," how often does He get for answer, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send"! Somebody must go and open the prison-doors, doubtless; but here are several much better suited to that work than he is: *they* are the persons to pioneer and conduct the deliverance. This neighbor can much better afford to spend his time and money for the spread of the Gospel; that man on the right is much more competent for any public effort in behalf of religion; that man on the left will have much more weight with individuals, whether he shall exhort the backslider, or warn the impenitent, or encourage the faithful believer. Let these go down into the Egypt of the world's apostasy and of the church's decline, and labor to turn their slavery into the freedom of Christ. Let the minister of the Gospel go down: this is his calling. Let the rich man go down: he can give his

unused thousands to scatter Bibles and missions among the perishing, and make no sacrifice. Let the educated, and the talented, and the eloquent go down: they will make an impression, they will be acceptable to the people, they will persuade the tyrant to let the people go. Let such as are eminent for sanctity, the epistles known and read of all, go down: their words and prayers shall break bars and fetters like the strokes of a giant. But he, the plain man, the hurried man, the poor and unacceptable man, the worldly and perhaps impenitent man — what can *he* do? The work is a great and good one, doubtless; but it had better be done by others. So he wishes the Lord to send by whom He will send. Who is this man? Some fabulous character? some man embalmed in the books as a specimen of an extinct species? some man of the antipodes, whom it takes a half-year's travel to find? Or is it the first man I meet — yourself, myself, as 'we are or frequently have been? Lord, is it I? Have I been attempting to put on others my duty in the matter of the world's conversion? Have I left it to my neighbors to see that the daughter of Zion comes up out of captivity? Is it my practice still to say on the right hand and on the left, "Go *thou* down to the rescue,

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and go *thou*, while I watch my fields and flocks, and try to make the most of this world"? Ah! we must all come to the confessional. All have imitated Moses, not to say *are* imitating him. We have sought to put on others' shoulders the burden appropriate to our own. Happy is it if, at this moment, some of us are not waiting for others to do a measure of their duties for the salvation of the world!

What is the sequel of such conduct? In the case of Moses, it was high displeasure on the part of God. He was greatly offended, that, when He had laid on His servant a duty, that servant should seek to have some one else do it. It was not enough to excuse Moses that he approved the thing to be done: what God asked of him was a personal doing of it. It was not enough that he could plead incompetency, and a poor faculty of speaking; that the mission would cost him large sacrifices of quiet and business; that Israel were a jealous and unbelieving race, little inclined to welcome his interference; that their oppressors were fierce and mighty, and personally hostile to himself. Did not God know all this? and was He not able to give His messenger all needed faculty, courage, credentials, and impunity? Moses should



have started at once. Without loss of time, he should have seized his pilgrim's staff, and turned his face toward Egypt. Then God would have been pleased. But when, instead of this, the man began to seek excuses, and at length ended by saying, "Lord, send by the hand of whom Thou wilt send," then his Master's anger was kindled.

And does any one know a reason why the same anger should not smoke against us when we are guilty of the same sin? Have we any better excuses than Moses had for declining to go into Egypt? The world groans under its tyrant taskmasters, Sin and Satan. The nations are perishing in the driving, merciless servitude to which their own corruptions bind them. Perhaps your particular Zion, a melancholy captive to her own backsliding, refuses to sing the Lord's song in her strange land. God has heard the cry, and seen the tears, and has come down to deliver. He has called for a levy *en masse* to go to the relief of oppressed human nature. Every person in the community He has put under conscription to march forthwith to free that community from the bondage of its corruptions. As each can do something for these spiritual emancipations, He has said to each, "Come, now, and I will send thee into

Egypt." And when we allege excuses, and finish by saying, "Send by the hand of whom Thou wilt send," will the Master be content? Suppose we would be glad to have every house of bondage broken up; suppose we can truly tell of great incompetencies on our part for the vocation of deliverers; suppose the fetters are strong, and the work hard, and the bondmen themselves undesirous of our services—will such a mosaic of excuses suffice to turn Divine displeasure from us, any more than it did from Moses? In some respects, we have less show of excusability than he. The emancipation to which we are called to contribute is more important than that which God proposed to give the Israelites. The bondage of sin is worse than that of Pharaoh. Its fruit is far more bitter, and its chains far more strong. In our mission we have no serious dangers to meet. We can do all sorts of religious labor in behalf of the church and world, without jeopardizing life or limb. But Moses, humanly speaking, took his life in his hand when he went into Egypt. Between the sword of the king and the violence of the indignant populace, the chance of escape without a miracle was exceedingly small. Yet, when the hazardous enterprise was declined, and left to another's doing,

God was greatly offended. How much more will He be offended when we decline a more important work, under less provocation of prospective danger and hardship! How much more will He be offended when we say, "Lord, send by the hand of whom Thou wilt send," to sustain missions among the heathen, to give churches and teachers to the new settlements, to pioneer by prayers and meetings and religious conversations a revival of religion at home; that is, to bring up the oppressed out of Egypt! Do we say that Moses was really a wise and great man — a man who had enjoyed princely advantages, and become learned in all the wisdom of his times and mighty in word and deed; that no man living, despite his pleaded inability, was so capable of the enterprise to which he was called as himself; and that, therefore, Heaven might be justly indignant at his backwardness? Truly; and we are as competent to do our work as he was to do his. He was called to *lead* the exodus: we are only called to *help* an exodus according to our ability. If our ability is small, then only small help is required of us; but, as we are all able to go down into Egypt and work, this much, at least, is a duty of all. Had Moses miracles promised him for his mission? How much better was

that than the promise we have, "As thy days so shall thy strength be."? God will see that we are provided with the means of doing, and of doing well, all the work He lays on us.



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XI.**

**AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?**

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## AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER ?

**A**M I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER ?

To this question, Cain was ready to give an emphatic negative. He was *not* his brother's keeper. "If Abel has gone to feed his flocks on the east or west side of Eden, I am not to be presumed to know any thing about it. If, in the course of his wanderings for pasture, he has come to some harm, has lost his way, or been devoured by wild beasts—I am not to be considered responsible for that. He is his own master. He can take care of himself. My own affairs are enough for me. If he must have keeping, not I, but his parents, Adam and Eve, should give it. They are his natural protectors. Let the question, Where is Abel? be put to them. To keep Abel is no business of mine."

But God took a different view. He considered Cain a responsible keeper of Abel. "Where is Abel, thy brother? Is he lost amid the wild? Has some lion rent him? Or, is he still safely tending his flock on some distant rich pasturage



which he is reluctant to leave?" God maintained that Cain was bound to have some knowledge on these matters. It was not enough for him to attend carefully to his own private affairs. He was not permitted to devolve all the watching and keeping of Abel upon Adam and Eve. A share in that kindly oversight belonged to him. Such, plainly, was God's view; and He was disposed to make Cain answerable for any harm that had come through his negligence. Close by the side of the tiller of the ground, as he toiled, spake up a cold, menacing voice (which was not that of Seth, nor of Adam, nor of any visible person, but which his heart must have at once recognized in mortal fear as though it came from back of that sword of flame which he had seen threatening before the gate of Paradise): "*Where is Abel, thy brother?*"

All who fairly consider the circumstances will feel it necessary to take the same view of Cain's duty toward his brother as did God. Let the man deny as much as he may that he is his brother's keeper, we easily see that the denial cannot be sustained for a moment. Of course, it was not his duty to follow the shepherd about everywhere in his wanderings, and spy out every step, and deny him all freedom and privacy, even for so good a

purpose as to see that he came to no harm. To be a keeper it was not necessary to be a jailer. There was a mode and degree of keeping which would not have been oppressive, which would have trenched on no rights, which Cain would not have objected to receiving himself, which was fitted to give the object of it much security with little annoyance. This, Cain should have given to Abel. That patriarchal dispensation, the dispensation of natural conscience, bids man do good to all as he has opportunity. If Cain saw the sheep of his brother straying, it was his business to give notice of the fact. If he saw his brother leading away his flocks where no pasture would be found, it was his duty to save the useless expense of time and trouble by giving the information in his possession. If he saw a tiger lurking in expectation of his prey in a thicket toward which Abel was unguardedly tending, it was his business to give timely signal of the danger, and, as far as possible, help an escape. As a man, Abel had a right to claim this much at his hands. As a *brother*, he could make out a still stronger claim to such a service. Nature taught Cain, as it did Paul, the propriety of feeling a special interest in "his brethren, his kinsman according to the flesh." But Cain was, also, an *elder* brother. In this

fact lay an additional element of obligation. His greater age was naturally joined to greater experience, and greater strength of body and mind. After Adam, he was Abel's natural counselor and protector. He should have sheltered him, and taken from him the brunt of every blast, as the older and taller tree does for the small one at its side — as the mountain does for the hill that nestles quietly and sunnily at its base. Yes, Cain, in face of thy bold and insolent denial, thou *art* thy brother's keeper. We have God's word to set off against thine. We have first principles, and laws of conscience to set off against mere assertions of a sinner. And these beat back thy assertions as the storm-wind beats back the handful of dry autumn leaves which a child throws against it.

A like strain of argument will show that we are, to a very great extent, keepers of our friends and neighbors in matters of religion. Like Cain, we are not seldom inclined to disavow this position. When men sin and perish about us, should some one demand, "Where are your friends and neighbors?" he would be apt to get for answer from not a few, if they would speak out what is within, "Am I their keeper? It is not my fault if these people are careless and irreligious. I do not consider myself

blamable for the sabbath-breaking, the profanity, the unbelief, the desertion of the sanctuary, the stupidity under the Gospel, the backslidings, of others over whom I have no authority. No doubt the evil is great; but I have my own affairs to attend to. I have my own soul to look after. Between my secular and religious cares for myself, I have no time left to ask where others are religiously—what they are doing, whether safe for eternity, or not. If another than themselves is bound to know about these personal matters of theirs, it is the minister of the Gospel, or some peculiarly gifted or circumstanced private Christian, or some nearer relative, warmer friend, closer neighbor." Such, but too often, are our acts and feelings when put into language. Cain helps our hearts and lives to words. We are not keepers of the souls about us. Do we act as though we thought ourselves answerable somewhat for the religious state of the community in which we live? Shall we cast out the maxim, that actions speak louder than words?

As in the case of Cain, however, our negative has to contend against a Divine affirmative. For our every, "Am I my brother's keeper?" comes back to us from the menacing sky, a "Where is he?" The assertions are met by overwhelming

counter-assertions ; and an accusing God takes it upon Him to contradict the self-exculpating man. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself ;" "do good to all men as you have opportunity." Ministers must watch for souls as they that must give account. The watchman must blow the trumpet, and give the people warning, if he would not have their blood required at his hand ; and you laymen, to whom belongs, at least, some part of the ministerial opportunity for helping the spiritual safety and profit of those about you, you must do for them a corresponding part of watching and warning. Do you not hear the, "Where is he ?" Does it even require a sharp and practiced ear to catch the stern inquiry ? Surely every one can hear it. And we are to understand that God will not for a moment allow the idea that we have nothing to do with the religious condition of our neighbors ; that we may lawfully live in ignorance and unconcern of what they are doing, hazarding, suffering, enjoying, as moral and accountable creatures. He says we must look after them. He says we must see to their safety and welfare. No Seths in the form of some specially-devoted Christians, no Adam and Eve in the form of a Gospel ministry, will be accepted as keepers of the community in place of

ourselves. Each must practice a keeping on his own account. If he sees his neighbor hewing out cisterns which cannot hold water, God says, "Warn him of his fruitless labor." If he sees his friend tending unguardedly toward the lair of a hungry lion of temptation or wrath, God says, "Warn him of his great danger." If the church is the Abel, unadvisedly straying into the wild further and further from running waters and green fields, God says, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." To each, everywhere, God says, "Thou art a keeper of souls."

And God is in the right. We have but to listen at the doors of our consciences, closed though they may be, to hear within a decided though muffled "Amen." From frontier to frontier of the parish, there are religious dangers abroad. All your acquaintances are haunted and hunted by them. Not one of them but is attacked by Satan many times a day. Not one of them but daily runs risk on risk of losing his soul. These are no trifling dangers. They are as much worse than the tempests, the lonely barrens, and the savage wild beasts to which Abel was exposed, and from which Cain should have done his best to

screen him, as one can well imagine — not so much because they are dangers not easily escaped, though this is true, but because they are dangers of the worst and sorest evils which human nature can suffer. Close linked to these perils are opportunities of great advantages. By the mighty negative pole lies always an equally mighty positive one. If our neighbor is in danger of hell, he also has an opportunity for heaven : if he is in danger of for ever growing worse and worse, he has, also, an opportunity of for ever growing better and better. Hence his safety is matter of very great moment ; and, if we have any power to promote it, the law of benevolence and of doing to others as we would that others should do to us, bids us put forth that power heartily. *Have* we no power to help ? Let not even the merest child say this of himself. The man least furnished with means and opportunities of usefulness is furnished like a palace. Gigantic forces are hidden in his prayers. They are a mine of help, not for neighbors only, but for the ends of the earth — an unworked mine, very likely, but inexhaustibly full of the best blessings for all mankind. It does not take great abilities to be the means of saving souls. A finished education, and great stores of learning are by no means indispen-

sable to our success in persuading men to Christ. Family, station, substance — one may act the part of a religious keeper to his friends and neighbors very successfully with none of these. It is no rare thing for God to choose the weak and despised before the mighty and honored as instruments of His renewing and sanctifying love, that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of God. As we all are thus able to look after the moral interests of the community to advantage, the first principles of conscience demand that we all should do so. Simply as human beings, we are under this law. As *neighbors, intimate associates, friends*, the law bears upon us with a special pressure. We can bring to bear on those of the same community with ourselves more various, intense, and frequent influences than we can exert elsewhere: we can do it more easily, with less of sacrifice to ourselves. We are most bound to do for those for whom we *can* do the most. Special facilities for usefulness create a special obligation. It is nature, and it is also justice, to pray and labor with more heart for those with whom we are connected by the most ties. If the ties, instead of being merely those of neighborhood, association, and friendship, are also those of affinity and blood, we are bound still more



strongly to act the part of keepers. Still more emphatically does nature summon us to look after the spiritual interests of *fathers, husbands, brothers, children*. These near and dear relatives — where are they? what are they doing? Are they religiously safe and prosperous? If we do not watch over their safety as accountable and immortal beings, our neglect is criminal in the highest degree. Well may God call out to us, “Where is Abel, thy *brother*?” Ill may we answer, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” We are his keepers — most certainly we are. We are not to annoy and repel him by turning ourselves into jailers and spies, and following his every step by an incessant worry of rebuke and exhortation; but yet nothing is more sure than that we are in some way to watch for his soul as they that must give account. We are to give him the benefit of our shield when he is attacked. We are to make way for him with our sword when his progress is withstood. We are to draw him up with the cords of our prayers and encouragements when he has fallen into the pit which Satan has dug for him. Whenever an opportunity occurs, or can be made, to help him away from destruction and toward everlasting life, to break the jaws of temptation and pluck the spoil out of its teeth, it

is our business to do it, far more than it is to feed him when hungry, and clothe him when naked ; far more, indeed, than it is to help ourselves to daily bread. Each of us is a bishop to his own community, divinely appointed to oversee its religious state ; not in a spirit of authority and domination, but in one of gentleness and brotherhood ; not with airs of superiority, but even as he would that his neighbor should do to him — divinely appointed to teach, to confirm, to control for their religious advantage, all those about him in just those quiet, unobtrusive ways which they may use toward him.

If these remarks are just, there is great reason to fear that we are answerable for some dire calamities which have been occurring among us for years past. Do you ask what has happened that deserves to be called a dire calamity? Is there really more than one thing that deserves such a name? What else can I mean than the dying of men in their sins, and consequent loss of their souls? Since you, my friend, have been moving about influentially among these families, how many persons from among them have dropped away! Have these all left the world in Christian faith and hope? Count them up, recall their lives and deaths, and see how many, to all human view, lived

impenitently, and died as they had lived. Scores have gone down to hopeless graves. Scores are ruined past help. And yet you were a *keeper* of these lost immortals. If my arguments are sound, it was your business to watch over these persons, and see to their spiritual safety. You were in a condition to bring considerable influences to bear upon them to lead them to repentance and Christ. Did you do it to the extent you might have done? Did you do it *at all*? Be honest with yourself, and say if you have not some misgivings that a careful inspection will reveal some spots of blood on your raiment. In the ancient palace of Holyrood, one is shown a dun place on the floor, and is told to see the stain of Rizzio's blood, shed more than three hundred years ago. The traveler feels that it may be so: there *is* a suspicion of blood in the shaded look of that wood. Happy is it, if, on careful inspection of your garment, you find only some shaded spot which *may* have been marked by the ebbing life of some destroyed spirit. But there is great reason to fear that you will find much more. Of those perished neighbors and friends of yours, was there not some one for whose salvation you did nothing? Was there one for whose salvation you did as much as you well could?

Perhaps, being merely a *professed* Christian, you neither did, nor intended to do, any thing for the conversion of any of them. And yet you were your brothers' keeper. Is it not a formidable thing to be answerable in any degree for the loss of a single soul? What is it to be held to account for all the souls that have been stricken down at your side, unassisted, and almost unlamented, since your responsible agency began?

We have great reason for being circumspect and laborious in behalf of the religious interests of *living* neighbors and friends. We cannot now reach those who have gone to their account. However much they have suffered through our fault, we cannot now make them amends; but we can put a stop to further guilt of the same sort; we can repent and do works meet for repentance: and this is what we shall feel greatly concerned to do, if we give due weight to the considerations just presented.

What are we doing for these living and yet dying souls about us? If we are really their keepers, and yet are strongly tempted to forget the fact; if it is true that they are in great danger, and that we have great opportunities for helping them, and that God insists on the helping from us as a

most sacred duty — then, certainly, it deeply concerns us to bestir ourselves. If it were not *Goa* who says, “Where is Abel, thy brother?” doing nothing would be a less grave matter. If they were not immortal souls that are being jeopardized, then we might wrap ourselves up, each in his own affairs, and leave our neighbors to their fate with less guilt. If opportunities of religiously helping them were less many, if truth and prayer and a holy example were less mighty, then we might more excusably remain inactive in the Vineyard while all around us men are sinning and dying.

WORK IN THE VINEYARD.

XII.

THE IDEAL FAMILY, PARISH,  
NATION.

## **XII. THE IDEAL FAMILY, PARISH, NATION.**

## THE IDEAL FAMILY, PARISH, NATION.

**I**T is a beautiful thing to see — a man serving God without sympathy and countenance from those around him. He stands by himself. He is the only one of his family walking in the right way. Father, mother, brothers, sisters — not one of them is with him in his religious position. Perhaps he is not only the one Christian of his family, but also the one Christian of the entire community where he lives. Such instances are not uncommon in our new Western settlements. Nay, perhaps he is the only Christian in the entire nation to which he belongs ; as was the first Chinese convert a few years since, who could look about on some hundreds of millions of his countrymen, and see not one of them walking his road. Such a Christian, standing firmly in his solitariness, it must be acknowledged, is a sublime spectacle. He is a spiritual hero, will have a hero's reward, is worth going thousands of miles to see. Men, ere now, have gone quite round the world to see a less sight. The example is noble ; and it is immensely



profitable to the man himself to serve God at the expense of even such solitude and singularity. The service of God is so good a thing, that one can even afford to go positively against all his relatives and acquaintances, and countrymen, and even race, for the sake of it.

But still it seems to me a more beautiful thing, and one more profitable in all directions, when a religious man, instead of standing like a solitary tree on the bleak moor, stands like one of the members of a domed and musical forest—surrounded in the family, the parish, and the nation, by those having the same Christian feelings, and leading the same Christian life, with himself. A godly society is a nobler thing than a godly individual. It comprises in itself a larger amount of goodness and salvation. It does more for God. And each member of it is safer, happier, more progressive, and more useful, than he could have been in a state of separation from his companions. For almost all purposes, union is better than a unit. A single faithful soldier in the midst of widespread revolt is a noble object. Abdiel is sublime. But an army of such soldiers in their compact and sympathetic battalions is a braver sight, and will be likely to do infinitely more for their cause, with

vastly greater safety, comfort, efficiency, and improvement to each individual. The solitary Abdiel is so much rescued from the gibbet in the day when the revolt shall be crushed out: the army is that salvation thousands of times repeated.

*The case of the family.*

Any Christian who has stood for years and years alone, the sole representative of religion in perhaps a large home-circle, will sadly agree with me when I say that such a position is an unfortunate one in many important respects, and would be wonderfully changed for the better for all parties concerned, should those parents, brothers, sisters, children, all who compose the household, heartily join him in serving God. It would be better for him, better for them, and better for the world. It would be a beautiful thing to see, and a most advantageous thing to be.

His religion needs *support*. It has not yet come to stand like a pyramid. It has still a great deal of weakness and tremble about it. It is capable of great leanings, and even great falls. There are many strong influences, strong as Satan and native depravity, at work to push it over. But he needs something more than support: he has *progress* to

make. If he does not go forward, he must go backward: if he does not walk still more erectly and firmly, he must fall. To support himself, to advance, he needs all the help he can get. But does he get help from the exclusively worldly surroundings of his home? Does that atmosphere of worldly examples, worldly words, and worldly sympathies, which he is always breathing, tend to increase his spirituality, or even to maintain it at its present level? The tendency is all strongly the other way. It is to clog and abate his piety at all points. Though this effect may not be intended, though the positive purpose of that unchristian but still affectionate household of his may be to *not* place a single straw of religious obstacle in his way, still he must have double watchfulness and effort, or he will find himself gradually sinking, sinking, toward the merely carnal life of those about him. He may bear up under these circumstances, and even go on from strength to strength, as many have done; but it will be only after a special struggle and risk. But, could all the members of his family be brought to join him in serving God, how different would be his circumstances! As in a group of closely-standing sheaves, each stands the more firmly against the winds because of the pres-

ence of the rest, so in the family group where all are Christians, each gets Christian stability and uprightness from all the others. Their examples, their words, their prayers, all go to confirm him in the right way. Their sympathy spurs his courage, and gives him a firmer and readier step. His daily atmosphere is highly electrical and tonic to every good word and work. He is doubly armed against backsliding. With the sound of the trampling feet of accompanying father, mother, brothers, sisters, children, in his ear, he can press onward and upward with inspiration. And let me not forget to add, with how much more comfort! As long as the rest of the household are serving another master, their plans of life, and ways of thinking and doing, are constantly chafing and rasping his. It is an ever-present grief to him to see the dearest friends he has in the world holding place as the enemies of God, and rapidly nearing the point of eternal separation from him and Heaven. But, could all those home-friends be brought to serve the same Divine Master with himself, then the thousand unpleasant frictions incident to contiguous characters and courses whose directions are so unlike, would change to pleasant harmonies and helps; and ever in his heart would lie the sweet-

ness of the thought that his friends are God's also, and are on the way with him to the kingdom in glory everlasting. How a Christian, with all his family going the broad road, can pass life in any tolerable comfort, under any circumstances, is a mystery ; but it is, perhaps, an equal mystery, how, with his family all walking with him in the narrow way, and their feet audibly keeping time with his up the steep ascent, he can, under any circumstances, help passing a life of joy and praise.

Let that Christian no longer stand alone ! Let parents, wife, children, brothers, sisters — all who sit with him at the same fireside, and surround the same table, and are sheltered by the same roof — let them join him in a more important sameness, and be disciples of the same Master ! It will be better for him, and, beyond expression, *better for them*. He cannot join them on their path : they must join him on his, else there will soon be a final parting of company. In fact, the question of joining him is simply the great question of living or dying. Shall they, with him, grow better and better, and at last, with him, triumphantly enter the eternal Better Country ? or shall they, gradually going from him, grow worse and worse, and at last, without him, come to that Worst Land which never

gives up an inhabitant, and where the light is as darkness ?

Better for him, better for them, *better for the community at large*, that the house be no longer divided against itself. The union will add new friends to the cause of Christ, and make the old friends more efficient. There will be new people to pray, to labor, and to exemplify in behalf of religion ; and the now solitary Christian will himself exemplify and labor and pray all the better under the stimulus of his co-operating friends. Now Christ has a friend in the citadel : then he will have the citadel itself. Now division is weakness : then union will be strength. Is not concert the strength of all great enterprises ? Great businesses go by partnerships ; great victories, by soldiers banded together according to the rules of war ; great missions, by good men co-operating in societies ; great states, by confederation of cities and provinces. As an executive force, the family is worth many times the individual.

*The case of the local community.*

It is very desirable to have all the members of the same family united in serving God ; and it is further desirable that the same union exist between

all the families of the same neighborhood and parish and town. A certain part of them are now engaged sincerely, though with many imperfections, in that glorious service. How much better it would be if we could say all, instead of a part!—better for the Christian families, better for the unchristian, and better for the world at large. How much more beautiful the sight, if from Maine to Texas of your parish, through center and through outskirts, every household believed, every household prayed, every household loved the sabbath, the sanctuary, and Christian ordinances, every household trained its young according to the principles of the religion of Christ!

In that case, the Christian character of your family would receive support and stimulus from every other. Now it has many evil examples of every grade to contend against. Some families are worldly, some are unprincipled, and some are wicked. Their influence is to lower the tone of piety in your household. It is a steady pulling downward from morning to night. The Christian nurture of your children is encumbered with many risks and drawbacks. But, if all these families were firmly set on a Christian footing, they would greatly help you, instead of hindering. Their examples,

their words, their prayers, would be always drawing you and yours upward, instead of downward. Your children would find by the wayside and in the schools only such as have been trained at home to fear God, and regard man. They would not hear the words of profanity, indecency, and scorning. You could give them the nurture and admonition of the Lord with double ease. You would be relieved of a world of anxiety about them and the whole rising generation. Instead of vexing your righteous soul from day to day with the unrighteous deeds and prospective fate of neighbors and acquaintances, you would have the generous satisfaction of seeing on all sides things lovely and of good report, and of anticipating for all these neighborly homes, that they will brighten from this world into a better. So with every other head of a Christian family.

But a still greater improvement would take place in the condition of the remaining families. Households now Christian would be improved : households now unchristian would be regenerated and saved. There would be a sheer rescue of many scores of homes from death and hell, and from an ever-growing sinfulness which is as bad as death. In many scores of homes would be born



joys, hopes, and harmonies infinitely more pure and elevated than they have ever known.

Perhaps the Christian people about you do not form a large body ; but whoever should say that they exert no appreciable influence on the great interests of the world beyond, and the general cause of the Redeemer, would say a very rash and unphilosophical, as well as unscriptural, thing. Surely he would forget the power of prayer, which may make the feeblest believer as an armed host : surely he would forget how magical and mysterious is the spread of influence, and how, at critical points and moments, the smallest forces will give birth to the greatest facts. Those small contributions, those few prayers, those very defective examples, are a force worth mentioning in Christ's behoof on the great world-questions of the day. But this force would be far greater, were all the families in the community to join heartily in the service of Christ. The families now serving Him would receive a new spiritual impulse and life ; and would pray, Thy kingdom come, and would exemplify for it, and give for it, as never before. Then all these many households, now serving another master, would become, each a new center of prayer, alms, unconscious influence, leverage for the conversion

of the world. Prayers would be doubled; and doubled would be the power of each prayer; and doubled and redoubled all the aggressive forces for the elevation and salvation of men.

*The case of the nation.*

What the members of the same family are to each other, what the families of the same local community are to each other, such, as respects the point now before us, are to each other the various local communities that compose the nation. The mutual relations of these communities are such that it is very desirable to have them all serving God *together*. Scattered throughout our land are not a few places that deserve to be called Christian. The leading influence in them is on Christ's side: the great social forces of education, talent, property, and numbers, are mainly enlisted for religion. Now, it would be a most beautiful and advantageous thing, if these Christian places could be joined in their service of God by all the other hamlets and villages and towns and cities of the land—better for both classes of places, and better for the world at large. If, from Maine to Texas, every place were imbued with Gospel truth, filled with Gospel Institutions, and

governed by Gospel laws, what a gladdening picture of beauty would our land be to eyes of men and eyes of God! — nay, what a glorious power for good on itself, and on sister lands to the world's end!

No small part of the moral influences acting on the community where you live come on you from abroad. Your ministry comes from abroad, was born and educated in distant places. Your books, your papers — those wonderful levers in these days for both good and evil — they are all imported, and act upon you with the opinions and character of remote districts. Many teachers of your schools, and, to some extent, the schools themselves which you patronize, are not from among yourselves: through them, other parts of the land are impressing themselves on the minds and hearts of your children. Especially the government of this free country, embodying as it does the opinions and character of all sections, brings them to bear on you in a hundred subtle influences every day of your lives. This is only a glimpse of how deeply interested your community is in the moral and religious condition of other parts of the land. Their errors, their sins, and their judgments tend to become yours. On the other hand, their truth,

their virtues, and their prosperity travel toward you by numerous avenues. If all the places of the land were nobly Christian, it would sanctify all the speech, and all the print, and all the education, and all the example, and all the government that comes to you from abroad. It would call down the blessings of Heaven on the entire nationality — on you as a part of it. It would fill the land with sanctifying prayers. Thus, each community now Christian would find its best interests supported and promoted ; while all the other communities would find salvation in addition to improvement. And what a force for working on the whole world in behalf of truth and righteousness would such a land be, with its myriad communities ! With what a thunderous artillery of prayer would they besiege heaven ! What rivers of freewill offerings would flow into the Lord's Treasury ! What multitudes of ready apostles would look toward benighted countries, each crying, " Here am I, Lord, send me ! "

Frequently, all the members of a family are united in the service of God ; occasionally, all the families of a place are united in the same service : but perhaps never yet has the same thing been true of all the places in an entire nation. But such a comprehensive union is, in all

cases, the great ideal to be prayed and striven for. The individual Christian should make it his mark to secure, if possible, the conversion of every member of the household to which he belongs ; the Christian family should interest itself in the religious condition of every other family in the place, and bring to bear upon it every Christianizing agency possible ; the Christian community should extend its religious care as nearly as may be to all sister communities of the Commonwealth, and use diligently every accessible means of evangelizing the entire country : and just to the extent in which these effects shall prove successful will the party making them, and the party receiving them, and the world beyond, secure advantages of the highest kind.

The first tendency in man is toward neglecting the service of God altogether. When this tendency has been overcome, straightway another is encountered ; viz., to be *selfish* in religion. You have taken up the matter in earnest for yourself ; and now the danger is, that the remains of your evil heart will induce you to confine your care and efforts to your own personal salvation. Am *I* in the right way ? how shall I make *my* calling and election sure ? — such are the questions on which

you are tempted to expend all your interest. The last and hardest of all points to be reached is that in which we habitually recognize the monstrous absurdity of trying to work out our own salvation on selfish principles, and spontaneously strive to join others with us in our attempted service of God. Here Satan and our own blind hearts would, if possible, keep us puzzling feebly at the question of our private salvation, till we die. Multitudes of persons who have held Christian hopes for years have not yet got so far as to do any thing worth mentioning, or expend any particular solicitude for the salvation of the *inmates of their own homes*, to say nothing of their neighbors and their country. It is hard to break away from this wicked narrowness and selfishness, and find our chief religious culture and evidence in putting forth toward all within our reach that spirit of love and helpfulness which shone in Christ. But it must be done. We must not try to serve God alone. A *united* service must be the great idea with us : nothing short of this is politic, benevolent, Christian. Behold the policy which will save and exalt us, while saving and exalting all about us !



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XIII.**

**LOOK TO YOUR OWN FAMILY.**



### **XIII. LOOK TO YOUR OWN FAMILY.**

## LOOK TO YOUR, OWN FAMILY.

“**Y**ET now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin— and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book.” Moses wants to die, if his people cannot be forgiven. Let his name be struck from the roll of the living. A permanent estrangement of God from his dear though guilty companions seems to him too dreadful to be survived.

It seems that views like these were held by the apostle Paul. In his day, Israel had been cast off from Divine favor. The thought of it pierced him to the heart. As to Moses, so to him, it seemed a dreadful thing to have those bound to him by such special ties forsaken by their Maker. So dreadful did it seem, that, to prevent it, he would be willing to suffer Divine judgments, even to the point of temporal destruction. He could wish himself “accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.”

The spirit of these two examples I wish to commend to all who by profession belong to the same household of faith with the prophet and the apos-

tle. I would have them feel that it is an awful thing to have such as are bound to them by the most close and tender ties of life remain for ever unreconciled to God. Do you say it was only a temporal casting-off which Paul and Moses had in view? If they thought *that* to be so great an evil, what must they have thought of a casting-off that is eternal? With what infinite shrinking would they have looked at the idea of their very nearest friends and kindred passing a forever in sin and its retributions!

You belong to a family some of whose members are still impenitent. Your father or your mother is without God in the world. Your husband or your wife is unreconciled to Christ. Your son or your daughter is still going on in sinful ways. Your brother or your sister is still a stranger to the indispensable new birth. Now, I may well take it for granted that these persons are very dear to you. Most of them are your own flesh and blood. They have lived long years, perhaps, under the same roof with you. For years, they have eaten at the same table, and sat at the same fireside. For years, they have shared your joys and sorrows, and communed almost hourly with you in the unreserve of those consciously having but one inter-

est. They are those for whom you have endured and toiled, or who have endured and toiled for you. They have shown you many amiable traits; conferred on you many actual benefits; loved you long and well, and, perhaps, with a tenderness which belongs only to the warmest and gentlest natures. It is nature that they should be very dear to you; and they probably are so, and much dearer than you will ever suppose till you are forced by the Providence of God to look a separation from them in the face. Does it need any argument to show you that it would be an unspeakably dreadful thing to have these friends live and die in their sins? Can you think of any thing worse in respect to them than their remaining eternally unrenewed and unforgiven?

If they die in their sins, *you will never be united to them any more.* No matter how much you have loved them, or they have loved you; no matter how close and long established the tie which joins you with them; you will never meet them again. Do I say *never*? Perhaps at the day of judgment you may see them for a little time on the left hand of the judging Christ; but it will be for only a little. And then you will never see or hear them again. You will go and sit down at the marriage-

supper of the Lamb; but those who have eaten and drank with you on the earth will be absent. You will strike your harp to the Saviour; but those who were wont to rejoice with you on the earth will not be at your side to join in your strains. You will occupy the mansion which Jesus went to make ready; but they who for many years shared your earthly home will not cross with you the threshold of the heavenly. You will walk by the river that is clear as crystal; you will stand on the everlasting hills, and look abroad on ravishing landscapes; you will cleave the air with strong, bright wing, to do the errands of your Father, and see the wonders of His kingdom: but they who so often accompanied your movements in this world you will find absent from your side then. They will never cross your path any more. You think it a sad thing when that father, or husband, or son goes away, and leaves you for a few years, though you can hope to meet him again; and your eyes fill with tears, and your voice trembles with choking emotion, as you give the parting embrace. What would it be to part with him *for ever*? Loving child, wife, parent! — did it ever occur to you to estimate the dreadfulness of an eternal separation? Say, Christian mother, would it not be an awful thing to have that son

of yours pass from your side, never to return during all the life of God? Say, Christian wife, would it not be an awful thing to have that husband pass from your side, never to return during all the life of God? Let him remain unrenewed in heart, and as surely as you live, and God lives, and the word of the Scripture stands like the rooted mountains, that awful thing will happen.

If your relatives die in their sins, *they will be totally and for ever ruined in character.* You have seen very wicked persons. You have heard of worse. You have heard of men so bad, that the story of their atrocities made your ear tingle, and turned you pale with horror. But those wretches were not as bad as they could be. They were not quite fiends. Occasionally some redeeming trait would show itself, and remind one of a nature originally framed in the image of God. But these dear friends of yours, now so amiable, and adorned with not a few fair and honorable ways, are destined to reach a pitch of depravity which has absolutely nothing to relieve its gloom. Their characters will become a heap of ruins in which "there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." They will become as bad as they can be. Every hateful pas-

sion that you ever heard of as belonging to human nature will disfigure them, and in a measure greater than any history can parallel. Their minds will be swept clean of the last vestige of every thing that is fair and honorable and of good report. They will be the fit companions of demons, and will be demons themselves. I know that this is a dreadful and harrowing picture ; but what can I do? It is unvarnished truth, and the truth must be told while the telling can be of some advantage. If this much is dreadful, what is the whole truth? The half has not yet been told. You must add a *for ever* to this total moral ruin of your friends : you must multiply this intense wickedness by all the ages that shall ever roll, to get the full measure of that family disaster. A total wreck becomes as bad as it can be when it becomes a wreck without end. Say, Christian, is it not a dreadful thing to have that son hate God always, and with all his power of hating? Say, Christian, can you think of many things worse than to have that husband endlessly hate goodness with a bitterness only less than that he feels toward God? Say, Christian, is it not a thing well-nigh intolerable, even to think of, that your father will, world without end, detest with all his heart every thing that is excellent and pure, and cleave with all

his heart to every thing that is sinful, hurtful, and degrading? All this belongs to a character that is totally and hopelessly ruined. And this character must finally belong to all who fail to become reconciled to God. Much as you love them, it will finally belong to all the members of your family who die in their sins.

If your friends die in their sins, *they will be forever cut off from all happiness, and joined to all misery.* They will be kept from ascending to Heaven, and they will be thrust down to hell. Now the face of your child is often seen to beam with pleasure; but, when the curtain drops, that face will never send forth another ray, save what comes from an unquenchable fire. Now his voice is often heard sounding cheerily in your dwelling; but, when the curtain drops, that voice will never send out another happy tone—nothing but the wailings of unbounded anguish. Now you see dear blessed hope kindle in his eye; but, when the curtain drops, that precious light will die utterly out, and in its stead will burn the lurid fires of an incurable despair. While you will be sailing on the free wing of an angel, he will be shut up in his prison-house, and bound with his chains of darkness. You will have for society Our Father in



Heaven, and the Lamb that was slain, and Michael the prince, and the prophets ; but he will company with fiends. A few years, and you will have all your tears finally wiped away ; and again a few years, and he will begin to weep for ever. Shortly, you will part with sin and remorse together ; and shortly, too, he will be gnawed of the worm that never dies. Say, Christian, is not this dreadful to speak of, to think of, to be ? If your father or husband should sink to such a fate as this, could you put on mourning deep enough to express the greatness of the catastrophe ? You shudder at the picture : would not the reality be more to be shuddered at ? You are almost aghast at that faint conception of God burning as a consuming fire in your own family, which our slender description has given you : pray how would you feel in presence of the awful *fact* !

If your friends remain permanently unrenewed, *it will be a source of exceeding trial to you in this world.*

When you reach Heaven, God will find ways to make you happy, though your children are lost. But, in this world, the forecast-shadows of such an event will make you tribulation. You will have the wretchedness of seeing them gradually becom-

ing more set in their sins, and deaf to the calls of religion, as life advances. You will find your prayers and admonitions taking less and less effect upon them. From time to time, your heart will sink with growing forebodings of the destiny they are approaching. Perhaps you will be called to die before them. When you bid them farewell, it will be with a mighty misgiving at your heart that you will never meet them again. It will be one of the great pangs of dying, that those dear ones whom you will leave behind you are moving upon a path which will take them far from the place where you hope to find an eternal home. If they were plain friends of Christ, you might say to yourself, as the shades of the grave come settling about you, "Cheer up, O heart! though you are obliged to leave those to whom you are so fondly linked, it is only for a little. They and you are bound for the same place, and you only arrive a few days before them. Cheer up, then, O failing heart! you shall soon greet sons and daughters again where partings are unknown." But your children are *not* the friends of Christ. You must die without the solace of such thoughts as these. And your heart will drearily whisper to itself, as your family gather about to see you die, "Know you, O heart! what it

is that you are about to do? It is to take the last look of these faces that you will have for ever and ever. It is to speak to these the last word that you will have the opportunity of speaking for ever and ever. If you had been more faithful, would these terrible thoughts have haunted this dying pillow?" And so you will pass away.

But perhaps they will be the first to hear the summons to die. You will stand by their bedsides day after day, and watch their failing breath. At last you see they must go. Your thought at once instinctively leaps forward, and lifts the curtain of their hereafter. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would to God I could die for thee!" What anguish fills your soul as you see your own flesh and blood just dropping into perdition! Is it not death to see them dying? They are gone. The last gasp has been taken, and their bodies lie stiff and motionless. But not so your roused spirit. It goes out after the departed. It follows them to the tribunal, and then on to their doom. Whether it will or no, it must look in upon the world of wailing. And then conscience bids you stand, and lift your hand to heaven, and tell truly whether you have had any thing to do in bringing about that catastrophe—whether, if you had done

what you might, it would not have been prevented. Beyond a doubt you will have to confess many an unfaithfulness. Each of these will pierce you like a barbed arrow which will not come away. And, as long as you live, the fate of those poor children who died in their sins will haunt and torment you. So dreadful a thing is it to have your kindred perish !

Christian father, does it seem to you a dreadful thing to have your offspring live and die unreconciled to God ? I ask you whether you are doing all you can to *prevent* it. Christian wife, does it seem to you a dreadful thing to have your husband live and die unreconciled to God ? I ask you whether you are doing all you can to prevent it. Can you lay your hand upon your heart, and affirm before God that you know of nothing more you can do ? You ought to pray to God with strong crying and tears and quenchless perseverance for your perishing kindred : are you doing it ? You ought to be on the alert night and day to find wise opportunities to beseech them to be reconciled to God : are you so ? You ought to use all the influence you can command to bring them as completely as possible within the scope of the means of grace, whether public or private ;

and, if many efforts do not succeed, you are still to keep trying as diligently and nervously as ever : is this what you are doing ? If you are a parent, are you seeing to it that your children are carefully instructed in religion, that they are kept out of bad company, that, with the mingled voices of authority and persuasion, they are brought regularly in contact with the means which God has provided to convict and save the soul ?

Who confesses to a great fault ? If the impenitent members of your family were to-day placed on their death-beds, no doubt your conscience would be loud and bitter in its accusations. And is this state of things to continue ? Do you mean to live negligently on till hell suddenly opens, and swallows up your children, or other kindred ? How *can* you be so inactive ? Is it possible you believe, that, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God ? that, except a man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he is Anathema Maranatha ? that, except a man obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power ? Is it possible that you think that God will make an exception in favor of

*your* family ; and, to save your father or husband or child, will break His word, and unsettle the ordinances of Heaven ? Nay ; but, except they repent, they shall all likewise perish. Your interest in them, your tenderness for them, can do nothing to protect them, except in the way of bringing them to repentance. To this point, then, you should apply yourself without delay, and almost without measure.

No one has so good an opportunity of reaching the hearts of impenitent persons as the Christian member of the same family. If anybody takes interest enough in them to make it easy to breathe in their behalf diligent and importunate prayer surely it is he. If any can seize the most favorable times for laying the claims of religion before them, surely it is he. If any can bring to bear upon them the full eloquence of a godly life, surely it is he. There is scarcely an hour in the day in which he cannot exert upon them a decided religious influence. And, oh ! if he should feel as he ought to feel, if he should realize the dreadfulness of having them perish, he would deem no labor too great, no sacrifices too costly, to win them to the Saviour. He would count their repentance cheaply purchased at the expense of toiling, circumspect days,

and tearful, prayerful nights. What mother thinks it worth her while to do this for her unchristian children? What wife, for her unbelieving husband? What child, for the unrenewed father?

**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XIV.**

**CARE FOR THE IRRELIGIOUS  
NEIGHBORHOOD.**



#### **XIV. CARE FOR THE IRRELIGIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD.**

## CARE FOR THE IRRELIGIOUS NEIGHBORHOOD.

I COMMEND to the fears, the sympathies, the prayers, and the efforts of every Christian person, the irreligious families dwelling immediately around him.

### 1. *Families without any family altars.*

The morning breaks. Do we see the members of the household quietly gather, the old family Bible brought forth, the head of the family reverently open and read the holy chapter, and then humbly kneel amid a kneeling group to thank and supplicate Almighty God, the night's Preserver and the day's Helper? No. The household merely come together to consume a morning meal, over which no blessing is asked, and for which no thanks are returned. Then the plunge into the world. At noon another thankless and unblessed meal. At night another. And, instead of separating for the night with a common act of worship — with holy chapter, and prayer to Him by whose mercy they

have survived the day, and can only hope to survive the night—they straggle off as they may to their unblessed repose. So day follows day; and one generation grows up, and another dies, without knowing any thing of household worship.

I ask you to pray for such a family wherever you see it: it needs your prayers. I ask you to pity such a family: it deserves your pity. Those children cut off from the immemorial usage of Christian households, and from the most influential example of prayer — those parents without the sanctities and authorities of a family priesthood — those all of the household with no daily break in the sweeping tide of their worldliness, and no daily solemn reminder of their duty and their God — in short, that home bare of the majesty, and restraints, and aroma, and the direct prayer-blessings of Family Religion, is sadly circumstanced, compared with what it might and should be.

But some families are worse circumstanced than this.

*2. Families also without any domestic religious instruction.*

In some cases where there is no family altar, there is yet some domestic teaching in religious

things. The pious mother does not forget to tell her children the story of Jesus and His salvation, though her husband leaves the home altarless; and in the hush of evening, or the hush of the sabbath, she may be heard teaching her little ones to know and fear God, and lisp to Him their prayers. But there are some homes where even this blessing fails — where there are no pious and faithful mothers, no pious and faithful elder sisters, to say the thoughtful Christian words in the altarless dwelling — where, from year to year, as children push on to manhood and womanhood, there never rises on their ears the voice of Christian lessons. Quiet evenings pass, quiet sabbaths flee away, infants spring into youths and adults; and every thing in the world has been talked about, and counsel on all sorts of subjects given, save the things of religion.

Alas! I say. And do you also say it, my friend? I bespeak your sympathy and prayers for every such family about you. It needs them. Those children cut off from the benefits of the stringent command, "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when

thou risest up" — those children, with such fallen natures, and in such a tempting world, cut off from the most efficient and durable of all religious teachings (because the earliest, the kindest, and the most trusted of all), those coming from paternal and maternal lips in the freest intercourse of question and answer — those parents so unfaithful to their responsibilities, and heaping up such accusations and remorse for themselves at no distant day — that home, vocal from morning to night with all sorts of worldly precepts and counsels, and never with such as are fitted to renew and save the immortal soul — oh ! is it not to be felt for, and feared for, and prayed for, and, if occasion serve, labored for !

But some families are in a worse condition than this.

### 3. *Families also without any closets.*

Sometimes households where there is neither family prayer, nor family Christian instruction, contain some members who privately read the Scriptures and pray. There is a closet, though not a common altar. That pious relative, who, left alone in the world, has taken shelter in her kinsman's house ; that pious domestic or pious

child whom God has surprisingly reached by His grace, despite the inauspicious home ; perhaps the father and mother who maintain the altarless and instructionless home, and yet have been brought up to say their prayers to God in private, and read their daily sacred chapter — perhaps one or more of these perfume and bless the house with their hidden worship. But I speak now of families where even this is wanting — no closet, and no regularly-read Bible anywhere about them. Old and young always plunge from their sleep direct into the world, without any thought of God and His message ; and, when the day sets, as uniformly plunge from the world direct into their sleep, unblest of prayer or Scripture. Months and years pass, and not one petition or thanksgiving mounts the sky above that dwelling. \* Months and years pass, and the dust is scarcely stirred on a single copy of God's forgotten Word. Neither parent, nor child, nor guest ever suspects any member of *that* household, when he goes away by himself, of doing it for any religious purpose. It may be to study ; but every one knows it is not to study the Bible. It may be to sleep ; but no one for a moment imagines it is to pray. Such things are not done in that family. It belongs exclusively to this world.

It is a family whose very smoke does not climb the heavens, whose windows and doors are all time-ward and earthward. No common domestic altar, no Christian family instruction, not even a single closet with its sacred prayer and Scripture — what ought a Christian man to feel and say and do about such a household, just over the way ?

Let him feel sorrowful. Let him say, "What a pity, and what a sin !" Let him do for that sad home by praying, and by expostulating, as God shall give him opportunity. No holy place in all that house — never a prayer, the year through, stealing upward from it like a wreath of incense, from the lips of child or parent, and calling down blessings — never a quiet chapter to throw light on life's duties, checks on life's sins, and consolations on life's sorrows, to a single soul under that Scriptureless roof-tree — not even a splinter or rudest imitation of the ark that blessed the family of Obed-Edom, remaining in that drear house empty and swept of all symbolical religion — no eye within it, whether sharp with youth, or blur with age, ever turning heavenward, while heaven's eye ever is bent so wrathfully on it, and yet so pityingly — say, you who have heard of a God, and a soul, and eternity, is this a house to be envied,

though crowded with treasures, and blazing with honors ?

And yet there are families in worse condition than this.

4. *Families also without a sanctuary.*

And that means, commonly, without any form of social worship.

There are households which are altogether without all private and family religion, which yet find their way more or less to the house of God—to see, to be seen, to pass away the tedious time, to do as others do, and as themselves have been in the habit of doing, and as their fathers before them have done ; perhaps for reason of higher grade. But I speak now of families whose prayerless, altarless, untaught homes have gone on, in the natural sequence of things, to separate themselves wholly from public worship. They have found a lower deep in their depths. To their worshipless weekdays they add a worshipless Sunday. The bell rings out clear through the quiet morning. Other families in respectful array are wending to God's House ; but not a soul joins the stream from that dwelling. Could you look in, you would find all things still in the sweat and disarray of the week-



day. These people have no *place* in the sanctuary. Year in and out, they hear never a prayer, never a hymn, never a chapter, never a sermon to which their own feet have purposely carried them. Within an easy ride, perhaps within an easy walk, perhaps within a stone's-throw, the sanctuary opens weekly its inviting doors; and their neighbors are there; and their neighbors' children are there; and the old and the sickly, and the busy and the strong, and the poor and the rich, are there, and all equally welcome: but *their* shadows never darken the sacred threshold. Yet they would resent it if called heathen, or atheistical, or even infidel. They pride themselves on belonging to a Christian nation. They want to be married and buried by a Christian ministry. They are not heard speaking positive evil of Christ and His Gospel; only somehow they have dropped outside of all Christian instruction and worship.

And that is bad enough. He who, from the world's beginning, bade tabernacles and synagogues and temples be built; who by express statute founded Christian sanctuaries and a Christian ministry with which He promised to be till the end of the world; who says that faith cometh by hearing, and salvation by faith — knows that it is

bad enough. Oh, too bad for immortal and responsible beings ! Those children at the very gates of religion, and yet growing up as if on heathen ground — those parents so careless of the eternal interests, so careless even of the temporal interests, of both themselves and their offspring, and preparing against themselves the accusations of sons and daughters to the third and fourth generation which have been stricken and ruined through the negligence of their altarless and closetless and churchless homes — that whole household bare of glorious and saving spiritual culture, and also of that extensive intellectual and social culture which incidentally connects itself with a fully-equipped sanctuary ; impoverished by their own hands in the midst of regal abundance — here is matter for sad and solemn thought, here room for gravest pity and prayer ; and, if you can do any thing by book, by tract, by a friendly pleading word in season, here is a solemn necessity for doing it. It is a distressed family, though it swelter in health and wealth. It is an unprotected family, though all the banners of loyalty and law stream over it ; for none of Heaven's banners appear upon it or within it. It is a guilty family — a family of destructive example ; and will, in due course, unless reformation take place, become a punished family.

But, bad as the state of such a family is, there are families in still worse.

5. *Families also without a Christianity.*

Some churchless families are unwilling to be counted as infidel. Though they pay no attention to the message and the institutions of the Christian Religion, they profess to *believe* in them. A great inconsistency stares us in the face, it is true ; but great inconsistencies are so common, that this shall not prevent our allowing that these families are the intellectual believers and theoretical Christians which they claim to be. But there are families which put in no such claim. To their own consciousness and to public knowledge, they have no faith in Christ and His Bible. Besides being without altars and closets and sanctuaries and Sabbaths, they are without even an intellectually-accepted Christian Religion. The boldest of them consider Jesus an impostor, His Revelation mere priestcraft. The timidest consider the whole matter to be still in doubt. And all must be set down as infidel — infidel thinkers, talkers, actors. Thus the parents grow old. Thus the children grow up. Infidel fathers and sons, and, that sore contradiction in terms, infidel mothers and daughters!

Such households are counted into the census of a Christian nation. When we poetically speak of "our Christian communities," our wide-sweeping words take in all these Christianity-less homes, and, in a general way, praise and bless them all; but these dreary homes without family religion, without closet religion, without public religion, without even the theory of the Christian religion in even the mothers and daughters, are very unblessed and sad affairs, and heavy drawbacks on the joyful flights of our patriotic oratory. One could weep at the number of such families scattered up and down in our towns. And were it not that of late the number of such as are—what is better than weeping—praying and working for such waste-spots is greatly increasing, it would be a weeping which we could not dare to console.

Think of it! What desert islets must such homes be in the sight of Heaven! How small the prospect that families so trained will come to any Christian good here, or to the Christian Heaven hereafter! What would the world be, were all families like them! What would society be, were every Christian element sifted out from its laws, usages, relations, and characters! How long would our republic, or free institutions of any sort, stand

on such a basis ! With no religious exercises to break the flow of temptations and a worldly life, with no Christian convictions to break somewhat the force of sin and evil example on the soul, with no common altar and no private closet, with no church and no Sabbath, with no religious instruction and no basis for any in its opinions—such a household is a wound to society, a threat to liberty, and before long a misery and destruction to itself. God forbid that such should multiply ! that they should continue even ! God forbid that the compassion and the prayers and the evangelizing labors of Christians, and the outpour of the Holy Ghost, should not be mighty enough to turn these bitter wastes gradually into gardens of the Lord !

But, bad as is the condition of such families—worse by far than any yet described—there are families worse conditioned still.

#### 6. *Families also without a God.*

There is a lower deep than infidelity. It is the black and almost bottomless abyss of *atheism*. When a family has slid away, first from a family altar, then from domestic religious instruction, then from the closet, then from the sanctuary and Sab-

bath, then from faith in the Bible, it will not be likely to stop short of that last stage of descent where it will find itself without faith in a personal God. Imagine such a group. Father and mother see nothing on the green and peopled earth, nothing in the arch of the crowded and spangled sky, that bespeaks Divinity. "Father, who made me? Did God, as I heard said yesterday?" — "My son, there is no God." — "Then I need not be afraid that God will see all I do, and bring me to account for it?" — "No." — "Then there is no use in praying to Him?" — "No." — "Then the Bible did not come from Him, and I may obey it, or not, as I please?" — "Yes." — "Then church-going and Sabbaths are mere priestcraft?" — "Yes." — "And this is the reason why you never go to church like other people; why you do any thing you please of a Sunday; why you never get us together, and read the Bible to us, and pray with us; why we never yet found you reading the Bible, or praying by yourself — is it?" — "Yes." — "And you wish me, father, to do as you do?" — "Yes." *Shocking*, I say, whether all this is said in so many words, or merely by implication. But in the one way or the other, it is sometimes said; and so we have homes without a God, both in practice and in theory.

If you ever come to such a household, do not curse it ; do not spit upon it ; do not fly as from the wrath of God. Still, no doubt, the wrath and curse of God are there. And when you turn aside to see this great sight — a bush full of wrathful fire, though for the present unconsumed — you are to pity ; you are to pray ; you are to give help, if help be possible ; you are to take warning. Keep your children away. Keep away yourself, save for purposes of Christian help. But, if God sends you an opportunity of throwing some quenching water into that baleful burning, omit not to throw it, for Christ's dear sake, and the dear sake of the souls for which He died. No family like this from sunrising to sunsetting ! Without an omnipotence of mercy, it is ruined over and over again. It is a portent — an entire family given over to believe a lie, and *such* a lie ; an entire family projected by Satan so far away from the kingdom of Heaven — the last tie to goodness and salvation broken almost beyond the possibility of mending ; the last religious ray in the home quenched ; the last security for the republic, for liberty, for society, for the soul, as far as that family is concerned, removed. Behold society's greatest wound, sorest leprosy, worst and most incurable of dangers ! When the foun-

dations are destroyed, what shall the family do? what the nation? Prevention of such a family is better than its salvation. But since it is here—just across the way, on yonder by-street, at the center, in the frontier school-district—rouse yourself to see, to pity, to pray, to labor, *to save* this, lost of the lost.





WORK IN THE VINEYARD.

XV.

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE  
LORD IN THE PARISH.

**XV. PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD  
IN THE PARISH.**

## PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD IN THE PARISH.

THE coming of Christ! I speak not now of the coming, nearly two thousand years ago, when the Son of God walked among men as the son of man. I speak not now of the coming, perhaps thousands of years forward, when Jesus shall return with pomp of clouds and angels and the great White Throne. Nor do I speak of that coming as Providence, by which Jesus, under whose feet all things have been put, every now and then chastises communities for their sins. There is still another coming of Jesus, that belongs to all ages, and is possible in all places, and is bright with the glory of all His other comings, of which I wish to speak — His *spiritual* coming, His coming to build up religion gloriously in a place where it seems almost in ruins.

Yes, almost in ruins. A true Christian church is there ; but it is sadly discouraged. Outskirts dark with unbelief — center dark with indifference. Conversions few — backslidings many. Congre-

gation small — circus large. The young given up to wildness and pleasure. The old given up to mammon. The trash and poison of the press flooding the careless families. So it has long been. "O Lord, how long," cries some saint in the secret place of tears, until his eye turns almost despairingly to the sky for some sign of His coming. "Why tarry the wheels of Thy chariot? Is the golden candlestick to be quite taken away? Must the church die out? Shall a last survivor take up his parable, and say, And I only am escaped to tell thee?"

Why is this? Does Jesus not care for the coming-in of iniquity like a flood? Is He not strong enough to lift up a successful standard against it? *Why* does He not come into that wicked place, traveling in the greatness of His strength, and mighty to save? I will tell you a secret. *It is because that church has not prepared His way.*

In the East, broad and beaten ways have always been rare. Should a monarch wish to visit one of his remoter provinces, it would generally be necessary to do much to prepare for him. He will have a large and brilliant staff of attendants. His court of the delicate and the great will come with him. The

bridle-path along which the mule of the trader finds his crooked and hard way will not answer for such a company. The old highway, once cast up for the march of troops, but now encumbered with stones and bushes, and washed by rains and torrents, is unfit for the passage of royalty. New roads must be built, and the old must be renewed. The high places must be brought down, and the low raised. The crooked must be made straight, and the rough plain. The streams must be bridged, and the sloughs turned to solid ground. Shrubs and trees must be cut down and drawn aside. Fountains of water must be opened at intervals in that thirsty land; at intervals must be placed pavilions, where the splendid train may refresh themselves for further advances. In the districts where bands of marauders prowl about the routes of travel, the skirting forests and fastnesses must be scoured of all elements of danger and annoyance. Every hamlet along the royal way must get ready to look its loveliest; every city must deck itself as for a festival. The palaces are furbished into new splendor. The nobles con over again the almost forgotten manners of courts. Welcoming eloquence is forecast; and the streets echo to the practice of welcoming music. High and low plan for a holiday attire.

Fresh plumes nod from the helmets of captains ; and the steely harness of troops glitters with new polish to the sun. Graceful arches are sprung ; stores of silken standards and streamers are laid up against the day when they shall wave proudly their greeting to noble and king ; the fuel for illuminations which shall make the night almost rival the day is gathered and disposed, ready to flash out its red welcomes. And, when all is done, the people stand watching for the first signal of *He is coming*, that they may go forth to meet him, and, as the jeweled and gorgeous band comes grandly sweeping up, escort him to his place amid the showering honors which they have been at such pains in preparing.

Some such scene as this was before the mind of the prophet when he wrote, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the way of the people ; cast up, cast up, the highway ; gather out the stones ; lift up a standard for the people." And some such scene should

paint itself before any Christian church that would have their King come to their needy place with the stately steppings of His spiritual visitation. For it vividly shows just what they have to do. They must concert together, and prepare the way of the Lord after the zealous and painstaking fashion of those loyal Eastern subjects. With all their heart, they must set themselves to removing obstructions, and furnishing facilities. If they will do this, no doubt they will in time hear the roll of His chariot-wheels along their smooth highway, and then see Him gloriously arrived among them.

But how shall they prepare His way ?

*Let them be deeply interested to have Him come.*

Other things being equal, what province is most likely to have a visit from its king — that which ardently desires his coming, or that which is indifferent to it? No church is likely to see an outpouring of the Spirit about it while it cares little or nothing for the blessing. Little desire to have Christ come will be followed by little effort to promote His coming. Hence, the first thing to be done toward preparing Christ's way in a place, is for His people to use means to quicken their sense of the desirableness of a revival of religion. Let them think of the honor it will do to the Saviour



they love. Let them think of its effect on their own comfort and usefulness. Let them think of the evils it will suppress, of the virtues it will create, and of the souls it will save—some of them dear relatives and friends. Wake up to the infinite worth of the humblest of these immortal beings! Here strike your first blow at preparing a way for the Lord.

*Let them have supreme confidence in the readiness of Christ to visit the community with His grace, in case due preparations are made.*

Were they fully persuaded, that, whatever they might do, Jesus would still have no disposition to come among them, they would, of course, do nothing. As far as they have misgiving on this point, so far their zeal and effort will be hindered. It is but that Eastern province over again. Will those subjects build a road for the monarch, who, they judge, has no inclination to use it? Will they do such work cordially and well, without considerable faith that it will not be labor thrown away? Truly good men seldom do justice to the delight with which Jesus will journey to them, just as soon as they have made it consistent for Him to do so. Must it be said? unbelief is a crying sin of the church, as well as of the world. Divine promises

are apt to lose half their solidity and brightness of look, before they have reached our suspicious hearts. "Bring ye all the tithes to the storehouse, and see if I will not open the windows." What could we ask more? But yet we draw back from a hearty confidence in the sure word of prophecy, and instead of leaping upon it joyfully, as upon a rock broad and deeply-bedded enough to bear up all the world, we place one foot timidly on it as men would on suspected quicksand. Conduct just the opposite of this promotes a time of refreshing. Christ is pleased with a strong, bold venturing on His word. Believe that He will be *delighted* to show Himself among us as soon as we have reasonably smoothed and straightened His paths—then the way is cleared of one very considerable obstacle to His coming. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." This speaks volumes. So cast yourselves boldly on the promises. It is another stroke of work in preparing the way of the Lord.

*Let them do all they can to put away from themselves all matters of public offense and scandal.*

If, like the church in Pergamos, they keep among themselves some who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (which thing Christ hates), they have

no right to expect a blessing from Him, but, rather, to be fought against with the sword of His mouth. If, like the church in Corinth, they have among them, unrebuked, some who practice the graver irregularities and vices, they must expect from the Master rebukes and rods, rather than gracious visitations. If, like some of the churches to which James wrote, they have among themselves alienations and feuds, let them do their best to compose their troubles; for where envying and strife are, there may confusion and every evil work be expected, and not a reviving Christ. Such public scandals are "stones of stumbling." They are even *rocks* of offense to many. Zion stands at the lattice. She strains her sight across the country. She cries, "Why is His chariot so long in coming, why tarry the wheels of His chariot?" Look lower, look nearer, O watching and wearied one. See you not the encumbered highway just at your feet? How can chariots roll, and coursers run, where there are such obstructions? Nay, but gather out the stones, and then look with a brighter face for the coming you desire. You have done another work toward preparing the way of the Lord.

*Let them humble themselves, each man for his own sins, and labor specially to put them all away.*

This is just the repentance which John the Baptist preached as preparing the way of the Messiah. It prepares His way now. The sins of professing Christians are always stumbling-blocks. They worry and delay all sorts of chariots, even the chariot of salvation. Not one of them can be taken out of the way without helping the Coming. A reformation in the church!—it instructs and persuades dying men like an eloquent orator. No Demosthenes of mere speech half so convincing and moving. God's blessing is on it and in it. "If thou put away from the midst of thee the putting-forth of the finger (set down here your own sins instead of those of the Jews), then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day." You have done another work in preparing the way of the Lord.

Finally, *let them offer special prayer for the coming of Christ; let them increase attention to all the means of grace; let them set themselves directly to instruct and arouse sinners to a sense of their condition.*

Would a cordial invitation from a province tend to encourage its monarch to turn toward it with all his splendid train? The coming of *our* King can be furthered by our proper and pressing asking

for it. "Thy kingdom come," spoken from many earnest hearts, will not fall to the ground. Did Paul think Christians likely to quite lose their labor in pleading that the "word of God might have free course and be glorified"? The prayers of good men are the steeds and chariots by which Jesus has often been brought among them. And swift messengers, too, have they sometimes been. Even while being dispatched, they came back with so much of Heaven with them that there was scarcely room to receive.

Oh, many the highway for Christ which united Christian prayer has cast up! Oh, many the crooked way which for Him has been made straight by a new and more engaged application to all the means of grace on the part of believers! Oh, many the rough place that has been made plain by Christian people taking up their cross, and going out into the lanes and hedges, and trying to compel by a blessed importunity the starvelings to go to the Great Supper of the Gospel! The same results may be reached again in the same ways. Prepare the way, and Jesus the king will surely come upon it, traveling in the greatness of His strength. Jerusalem will shake to His mighty tread. Even the curtains of the land

of Midian will tremble. The gloomy, benighted outskirts — almost heathen — will be moved at the presence of God ; and the whole dreary place, long mourned over as being scarcely more than a cemetery, will become vocal with “Lazarus, come forth,” and populous with resurrections. For He has come who is the Resurrection and the Life.



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XVI.**

**HELP YOUR COUNTRY.**



**XVI. HELP YOUR COUNTRY.**

## HELP YOUR COUNTRY.

THE home-missionary field that lies nearest a man, and best deserves the name, is his own bosom. After this comes his family, his parish, his country, his world, in a succession of ever-widening home-districts. For, even this world, as compared with the many other worlds, is our very accessible district, our theater of action, our home. Beyond a doubt, all these missionary fields belong to us, and should be cultivated *together*. The man who draws a line about his own bosom, and says, "This is my field, and I will not go beyond it, at least not until I have made it a perfect garden," makes a great mistake. No greater mistake, however, than he would make, should he draw a line around his own family, and say, "I will not lift a finger to help the moral and religious state of the community at large till I have made my own children all they ought to be — no greater mistake than he would make, should he resolve to confine his religious efforts to his own parish till that is in a perfect state of cultivation, before

doing any thing for other needy parishes, and the poor new settlements at the West where religious institutions have yet to be established ; or resolve, as did a man whom I recently met, that he would do nothing for the heathen until there are no heathen in his own country. Such a stand as this is altogether unscriptural ; and it is as unreasonable as it is unscriptural. These various forms of Christian enterprise are mutually dependent. No one of them can be put into a flourishing state by itself. What sane man supposes it possible to put any given member of the body into a perfectly healthy state, and keep it in that state, while all the other members are left a prey to disease ? Under what conditions would a man make the best progress in teaching a given child of his to speak the English language with the finest propriety of accent and fluency and grammar ? Would it be by concentrating care on him to the entire neglect of the speaking habits of all the other members of the household ? A noble English could not be made on such a plan. The contagious surroundings of the child must be cared for. His brothers and sisters must be sharers in the instruction he receives. By distributing his pains over the whole family-circle, the father will

make greater and quicker progress in the education of his favorite than he could possibly do by neglecting all others for his sake.

Bearing this in mind, look now at that branch of home missions to which it is customary to confine the name—that branch which aims to establish or sustain Christian institutions in needy places throughout our own country.

You know that these needy places are very many. Hundreds of them are in the North Atlantic States; scores on scores of them in highly-favored New England even. Shiftings in the centers of business, the poverty and sparseness of population in certain districts, emigration, apostasies from the faith—such causes, in not a few of these anciently-settled towns, leave the friends of Christ too weak in number and means and grace for the full support of their own religious institutions. They must be helped from abroad, or their fields will become deserts. Further, in the Southern and Western States, in their mighty stretch to the Gulf and the Pacific, there are thousands of communities, many of them of great size and importance, where, as yet, Christian institutions are either wholly wanting, or have so feeble a hold on the property or affections of the people that aid for a time is absolutely in-

dispensable. In cases not a few, the friends of religion are so few and poor, even in populous districts, that they are almost helpless toward making any suitable provision for the spiritual wants of their localities. Emigrants by hundreds of thousands, without evangelical religion and even without an evangelical belief, are annually poured upon the immense vacancies of the West. Every form of error is industriously seeking for the control of those rising communities. Romanism is there, and Infidelity is there, and many a deadly system that dares to call itself by a Christian name — all busy and strenuous in trying to shape the foundations of things, and to bring up the child in the way he should not go, so that when he is old he will not depart from it. Unless Christian people in older parts of the country bestir themselves with their aid, these many places will crystallize into strongholds of Satan. Their future will be ruined. Whole generations will perish in their sins. The poison will get into the national circulation; and who can estimate the woful infirmity and disease that will follow?

Now the Gospel bids the church send help to all such waste places. No matter whether they cry, "Come over and help us," or not: no matter

whether they want help, or not — the decree of the Gospel is, that itself must be sent to them, and kept among them. We, or our proxies, must go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature — *beginning at Jerusalem*. See how the primitive church acted. They went or sent everywhere, preaching the Word, founding churches, establishing a local ministry with all its appropriate belongings, in all parts of the mother-country; while at the same time they penetrated with their message and institutions into adjacent lands. So they understood the will of God. So their Christian consciences and instincts bade them. And the same obligation and Christian policy have been handed down to us. We must begin at *our* Jerusalem, and see to it that all *our* feeble and waste places are well cultivated in the interest of religion. The law of Christ is broad foundation enough for all our Home Missionary Societies — is good warrant for all the work they have done, or contemplate doing, in the needy fields of our East and West and South.

But suppose there were no such law of Christ. Suppose we have only the fact that the Gospel is the wisdom and power of God to salvation; that, unless these needy districts have it maintained

among them, great multitudes will be morally and religiously and eternally ruined—is not this enough? At all these waste or feeble points, souls are at stake, virtue and Heaven are to be gained or lost, generations made or unmade for an immortality; and a favorable issue is conditioned on the presence of sound Christian institutions, which cannot be had, unless other places of more means, or more grace, come to their help. Who that believes this, and has any humanity in his human nature, but feels impelled, aside from the positive Divine law that presses him, to do something to save these perishing ones?

But, in addition, there is a principle of *self-preservation* concerned in this matter. Suppose the churches of Connecticut should allow certain feeble communities in their midst to fall into heathenism, what would be the result to themselves? Would not these communities gradually become centers of contagion to the whole State? Do they not touch their neighbors toward all points of the compass? Are not their young men and women ever finding their way to the factories and farms and vessels and stores and homes of neighboring towns? Are they not making their opinions and characters felt every year in the Gen-

eral Assembly — expressing themselves all over the State in the laws they help to make or unmake? Do not plague-spots naturally widen? Will not a bed of Canada thistles, if neglected, gradually sow all the fields about? Not a church but finds it harder to be an exemplary church, not a town but finds it harder to maintain the tone of public morals and religion within itself, on account of its having in its neighborhood a waste place. It is a matter of self-preservation for flourishing churches to see that their neighbors are in good condition. All these communities are bound up in the same bundle. They are one body; and, when one member suffers, all the other members suffer with it.

And the same principle applies all over this one country of ours, bound together as it is by railroads and rivers and telegraphs and kinship and community of language, as well as by social and political institutions. The morals and Christianity of the whole land must, in self-defense, look after the thousands of leprous spots (or what will become such if not attended to in time) which lie scattered all about among them. If they would not be corrupted themselves, they must prevent or heal the sources of corruption. The general atmosphere of



the country will be damaged by these mephitic swamps scattered up and down. Let them, therefore, be drained. If the owners will not do it for themselves, their neighbors must do it for them. They can better afford to be at the expense of such sanitary measures than to be laid up themselves by dreadful disease.

I know of no way in which a friend to the *general secular interests* of these needy places, scattered all over our country, can so cheaply, easily, quickly, and comprehensively promote these interests as by giving them efficient Christian institutions. This measure is a radical one. It strikes at the roots of every thing that is mischievous. It fights against hunger and nakedness and sickness and idleness and intemperance and ignorance and demagogism and fraud and slander and quarrels and domestic infelicities — in short, the whole family of temporal evils. There is nothing that goes so straight to the vitals of the whole brood of social troubles as the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We have our Temperance Societies, our societies for promoting the observance of the Sabbath, our Children's Aid Societies, our societies for the aged and infirm, our societies in behalf of popular education, and so on; and they are not to

be objected to, but the contrary (they are all offshoots from, and are nourished by, the sap of the Christian Religion), — nevertheless, a Home Missionary Society is all these societies in one. It does the work of all when it maintains Christian institutions in a place. And it is the most economical of all agencies. There never has been discovered a means of generally helping, say, a Western community, one hundredth part as cheap as the maintaining of a home missionary in it. On a bare subsistence, that educated man sets himself down there, under a Divine commission, and with a Divine instrument in his hand, to fight against the roots and seeds of every wrong. Never was there so thorough and comprehensive an agency for general philanthropic purposes set and kept in motion on so little capital. A dollar spent for it will smooth more pillows, and dry more tears, and scatter more ignorance, ten times over, than in any other way known to our philanthropy.

Moreover, Americans should remember that every dollar they give to Home Missions is so much contribution to the permanence of our free institutions. Mingled virtue and knowledge — this is the one indispensable basis for popular freedom. Government by the people is neither desira-

ble nor possible on any other foundation. And this foundation our Home Missions are engaged, in the most durable and economical of all ways, in laying. If their object is accomplished, viz., to furnish every needy place throughout the land with the Gospel, and by the Gospel to cultivate all places of sufficient pecuniary means into an independent support of the Gospel, the failure of our popular representative government is impossible. Public morality and intelligence are as sure to follow this work as light is to follow the rising of the sun, and as sure to be wanting if this work is not done. Suppose the entire missionary work in this country to be suspended from this moment—every existing missionary pulpit suppressed, and never another established in the rapidly-settling Territories and States through all our Southern and Western empire, what would be the consequence? In a few years, the bulk of our people would be heathen. The majority of the nation would be without a Bible, without a Sabbath, without a worship, and without the fear of Almighty God. They would give us our rulers and our laws and our public opinion. No one who thoroughly knows the nature of a republic, and the nature of men, and the facts of history, needs to be told, that,

when things have come to this pass, the days of the republic are numbered. They ought to be. Nothing but the strong, swift hand of an able military dictator could properly govern such an America. Good people (and even the bad) would invoke a Napoleon as the last resource of our stormy and disorganized society. Indeed, we should, by this time, have been ripe for this step, had not our fathers, at the beginning of the century, been wise enough to set Home Missions busily at work. Since that time, by far the larger part of all the churches and institutions of learning now existing in the country have been founded, and fostered into their present measure of strength, by the home missionary effort, under one name or another. Had that effort not been put forth, we should have been to-day a heathen nation, either with our liberties already lost, or just ready to be engulfed in the maelstrom of a national mob that neither fears God nor regards man. But if we go on as we have begun, and *better*; if we expand our efforts with our means and our population, and carefully see to it that every needy district in our whole domain is supplied with strong Gospel institutions, we shall be fortifying our liberties as with castles and armies. We shall make them altogether

invincible. It is a cheap way of having nothing to fear for the republic : we insure the national future for a very trifling premium.

One of the best ways in which the Christian can cultivate his own piety, and a local church bring in a flow of prosperity on itself, is to "*abound in this grace also.*" Giving for the Gospel's sake is a necessity of spiritual culture. Watering others is an indispensable preliminary to being freely watered ourselves. Whatever its own necessities, the Christian community that cuts down and belittles its charities is cutting away its own roots. If a feeble church wants to remain feeble from generation to generation, let it scant itself in its giving. "To husband its resources," to be penurious toward God and His Causes, is not the way to live : it is the way to *die*. We need no other philosophy to account for the stunted stature and strength of many churches, than the record of the pitiful pennies a member which they annually give to spread the great kingdom of God over this and other lands. When will believers learn that "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" ? Let them learn of the flowers. These open their petals ; they shed their perfumes abroad.

Do they sacrifice themselves by their fragrant giving? Nay, they but unbosom themselves to the air and the dew and the sun, which paint them and transfigure them, and fill them with a richer sweetness and beauty. They were made to give and to be blessed in the giving. So were Christian churches. Let such as want to flourish, trust God, and be open-handed toward all good causes, beginning at Jerusalem. All evangelical Christendom will help us take care of foreign countries: if our own country is taken care of, it must be by ourselves alone. A glorious beginning has been made. Thousands of waste places have been built up. Whole States have been stocked with Christian institutions. By these means, and notwithstanding the immense European immigration we have absorbed, probably the nation is more thoroughly Christian to-day than it has been at any former period. But we must go on. The United States of to-day may be considered saved. But we must *continue* the salvation. We must save the United States of fifty years hence, with its amazing proportions and forces. And the successful experience we have had shows it can be done. With such Divine blessing on our efforts

as we have had for the last fifty years, we can subdue and hold this whole continent for Christ. Will you not do your share in this illustrious work?

**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XVII.**

**BY HELPING FOREIGN COUN-  
TRIES.**



**XVII. BY HELPING FOREIGN COUN-  
TRIES.**

## BY HELPING FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

THE Home Mission and the Foreign are mutually dependent. Every church at home, when nourished into strength, becomes a fountain of evangelizing men and money for far-off lands. The work of home missions once fairly finished, and our whole country from the Lakes to the Gulf, and from ocean to ocean, throughout its grand array of parallels and meridians, once stocked with robust churches, and we have such an outflow of Christian effort on the field of the world as puts to shame the total of all present missionary developments.

And the action is reciprocal. We help to evangelize our own country in the effort to evangelize others. We accomplish more improvement of our own moral wastes by that fraction of our giving which is laid out on them than we should by its entire total. Philanthropy is really the best Christian patriotism. It is that fountain, which, instead of hoarding its treasures within its native acre, sends them forth to fertilize distant valleys;

until the wealth it creates creeps back to itself, dislodges weeds and reptiles, clears out impurities, scatters the silver sand, rears the protecting marble, and fills all the neighborhood with the tasteful splendors of a manor home.

An *individual* promotes his own interest most effectually when not making that his sole aim, but when trying at the same time for the welfare of his family. Take, for example, his moral interest. He finds that he has many serious faults of character. They are so serious as to cause him great apprehension. It seems, at times, as if his whole force is needed for their removal. And, after such removal, how much better could he act for the moral improvement of the other members of the household—say, the younger brothers to whom the Providence of God has made him a foster father! Shall he, then, for a time, cease to look after their virtue while he is straining every nerve to help his own? They are falling into bad company—shall he take no measures to restrain them till he has corrected his own bad temper? They are becoming profane—shall he do nothing to abate this plague till he has succeeded in curing his own levity? They break the Sabbath—shall he do nothing to repair this fracture till he has built up

himself into the grace of liberality? No! says the public good sense. Such a course would defeat itself. The man will improve fastest in connection with an effort to improve those he is so tempted to neglect.

A like view would be taken of the *family* which, in its anxiety to improve its own members, should refuse to do any thing for the improvement of the families around. With one voice we should pronounce the policy short-sighted and suicidal. Great and pressing moral wants in a household cannot be best met by a close-fisted monopoly of its own efforts. It will never receive abundant dews till it comes out from the shade of its own roof-tree. Religion cannot be successfully cultivated on selfish principles. The anchorite must leave his den. The Japanese must set sail from his occult harbor. The invalid family must go forth to more than the draining of its own marshes as long as its neighbors' steam with miasms. While pushing its own improvements, it must hie to other farms; point out the debilities, consumptions, fevers, and deaths which lurk among them; show where drains should be opened, and disinfectants cast; and, after having taught ignorance into knowledge, ex-postulate knowledge into action.

The interests of those still larger communities into which a commonwealth is divided, are felt by all tolerably enlightened men to be subject to like conditions. The *parish*, like the family and the individual, will not thrive best on pure egoism. While it works with the right hand against its own evils, it must work with the left against the evils of its neighbors. From this law of thrift there is no dispensation, not even for the community whose moral state is the worst. The ties of intercourse and political relation which connect it with sister communities are so many imperfect conductors through which their character gradually travels to itself. In this fact lies its occasion for an excellent double-dealing. Its labor must look two ways. While casting the liberal salt into its own diseased waters, it must spare, at least, an occasional handful for those adjoining fountains whose streams are ever tending to mingle with its own.

And now can any one tell why we should stop short at this stage of our generalization? Why not take a step further, to the end of the climax, and say that — like the individual, the family, and the parish — the *nation* also will not find its interest in exhausting all its efforts upon its own domain, and that the effort of our own country to

evangelize the distant heathen but aids the effort to evangelize itself?

Collateral duties never interfere with each other. More than this, they are mutually auxiliary. We feel that it would be well to have it so, and, of course, that God has taken care that it is so. It is the discharge of a duty *under its appropriate circumstances* which is likely to realize its end most fully. And does not each right act give to the virtuous principle strength and facility which are genially felt in every other department of duty?

No one doubts that we should try to evangelize our own country. The only possible question is whether we are to "distract our attention" by carrying on with this an enterprise for the conversion of the world. The answer is at hand. Were the apostles allowed to finish supplying all the wastes places of their native land with flourishing Christian churches before they passed Hermon and the Ægean? Far from it. There never was a time when every city and hamlet of Israel were well supplied with Christian teaching. On the contrary, it has always been full of wildernesses, at best knowing only a pilgrim Gospel. Yet by the tenor of their commission the apostles were required some time in their lives to go preaching.

into all the world. And they did so. Leaving others to proceed with the Christianization of their own countrymen, they took up the staff of that mighty travel which looks to every creature. They sought out the hut of the Ethiop; they followed along his steppes the Scythian nomad; they held high communings with the star-gazers of Chaldæa; they poured the water of life by "Gunga's mimic sea;" they reasoned in the groves of the Academy; they challenged supremacy for Christ amid the palaces of imperial Rome. Behold the Foreign Missionaries! See the inspired Jew busying himself at the same time with both branches of the missionary enterprise!

The Lord turned the captivity of Job *when he prayed for his friends*. In this we have an example of the general course of the Divine Administration toward every benevolent man. It is arranged that he shall get blessings himself in attempting to bless others. Scripture promises are abundant to the effect that his giving shall return to him, like the ships of Solomon, freighted with precious things — with "measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

This will be readily granted. But it may not, perhaps, be as readily granted that God deals with

*associations* of men on the same principles as with individuals. When this view was eloquently put forth among us years ago, it seemed to strike not a few minds as a great and suspicious novelty. Yet it is true God subjects nations to the same rules of intercourse as individuals ; and, like individuals, nations are blessed according to their adherence to these rules. Can any one tell *why* a state should not practice toward fellow-states the moralities and charities a citizen is bound to practice toward fellow-citizens? Can any tell why the Golden Rule should vanish as soon as it comes within view of corporations, while each man in his insignificance is obliged to do to others as he would that others should do to him? Surely, truth, good-temper, justice, and charity are as charming and useful when shown by the United States of America toward China as they are when shown by myself to my own countryman. And bad faith, passion, cruelty, and selfishness—surely these are as hateful and harmful in the Father Land toward Mexicans, Spaniards, Indians, and Africans, as they are in me toward my next-door neighbor. The Old Testament shows the general principles on which Israel was to treat other nations and be treated by them ; and a due attention to



this record will serve still further to assure us, that, in the Divine Pandects, the municipal law and the international are one; that, were the various nations to be brought together into as many monster men, the general rules of intercourse now laid down for them would need no revision. It will also assure us that God may be expected to treat nations as such, according to the amount of obedience they include. Israel was so treated. When it forsook God, the whole nation was afflicted, though a part remained faithful. When it clave to him, the whole nation was blessed, though a part remained vile. And, in general, its prosperity as a people was according to the amount of Divine service within it. Hence we may say that God deals with nations on the same principles as with individuals, in respect both to rules of intercourse and to treatment under them. Does He require me to do good to those around, and promise great blessings in return for obedience? He also requires my *country* to do good to the countries around it; and especially that most vital and abounding good of sending to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He will reward obedience largely. And a nation as such can only be rewarded in the present state. As to the nature of this reward —

what is it so likely to be as those spiritual advantages which are most important to us, which God is most desirous to bestow, and which we have ourselves aimed to send abroad? Light and grace we give—light and grace we shall receive. Our Western desert shall bloom from seeds we have cast beyond the ocean. Our feeble churches shall be watered by clouds sprung from fountains we have opened for the antipodes.

We may also claim in behalf of the Christian work abroad, that it aids the same work at home by contributions to the science, the wealth, and the piety of our country. There is hardly any branch of useful knowledge which is not debtor to Foreign Missions. Astronomy, Meteorology, Philology, Ethnology, and especially the many sciences of Natural History, have all had large additions from the observations of the conscientious and educated men who are posted for Christ's sake in every strange country of the globe. And such additions are becoming every day more rapid and important. There is hardly any branch of *Commerce* which is not debtor to the Foreign Mission. It gives full and reliable information of the resources and customs of rich countries; it reduces their languages to form, and provides the grammars and dictionaries

which make acquisition easy ; it begins in them the reign of justice and order ; it quickens their industry and production ; it diffuses among them the many wants of civilization. Were the church to abandon her foreign missions, Mammon might undertake their support, and declare mighty dividends on the investment. And, what is still more to our purpose, this foreign labor does much directly to improve the quality of home Christianity. My own interests are so plainly bound up with those of my own family, my own village, my own country, that my doing for these is likely to involve a less pure and lofty exercise of the benevolent principle than takes place when I act for those who live a hemisphere away. Hence we may expect that the American church will gain special grace from its labors among the heathen.

Such are the contributions. Their bearing on home interests is easily traced. The higher the quality of American piety, the greater the effort it makes for its own wastes, and the better the type of Christianity it sends them. The wealth which commerce brings to our wharves is shared by Christian men and others who are disposed to do somewhat according to their ability for the progress of religion at home as well as abroad. But of what

use to Home Missions is the improvement of our *science*? In our own happy land knowledge is not kept in durance. It fears no Bastille of state policy, no Inquisition of religious bigotry. As soon as a new discovery reaches our shores, it betakes itself to steamers and railroads and telegraphs, and rides express to universities and mansions and cabins. And what does it in these various destinations? There was a time when ignorance was honestly thought the mother of devotion. Thank Heaven! such time has never come to us. We well understand that true science is one of the best pioneers and champions of religion—a John the Baptist to “prepare the way of the Lord, and make His paths straight”—a Paul to plead its cause on all Mars’ Hills, before all Sanhedrims, and in the midst of all wrestling democracies—a steel-clad Crusader, bold and strong, to carry triumphant lance into the homes of infidelities and heresies of every name. And it is not merely of the knowledge that is called *practical* that we have this understanding. We ascribe the same character, in a degree, to almost every thing that properly bears the name of science. And not without reason. It takes its stand in the schools, and trains our Christian young men into the work-

men that need not be ashamed. It goes among the masses, and humanizes them, and pushes forward the arts of life, and multiplies facilities for doing all useful work, and swells the streams of general wealth, and, by the quick sympathy of truth with truth, prepares the soul to receive the doctrine of Christ. And surely, if science, when rightly used, does all this ; if it elevates the character of our religion ; if it gives that religion larger means of defense and conquest ; if it puts into her hand greater alms, and greater facilities for applying them ; if it qualifies her ministers to teach more powerfully, and the people to listen more readily — then, surely, every addition to it should be reckoned a contribution to the Home Mission.

A single consideration further. It is, that our Christian labor in other countries goes to prevent their becoming missionaries of evil to ourselves. The awful corruption which now reigns in some of them is well known. In time, if Christians stand aloof, contact with civilization will gradually draw around this wickedness a slender drapery without abating its amount, and unsettle the old superstitions without establishing Christian faith. What dead bodies to be linked to us by commerce ! Already our intercourse with them is very consid-

erable. Before long, the sea will groan with the mighty fleets we shall send forth to gather up their productions and teach them our Gospel according to Mammon. And when those fleets return, will they be freighted *only* with teas and spices and cashmeres? Will they not unlade, free of duty, on our wharves vile opinions and practices, along with gorgeous plumage and sheen of diamonds, and sweet incense of Cathay? And will not the jungle-sin creep thence upon the land—like that jungle-plague which at last flashes its meteor sword in new settlements, and gather its dead among the scattered hamlets of the mountains? Behold work for Home Missions—the work which our Judsons and our Morrisons are now laboring to prevent!

Moreover, it is our destiny to be soon connected with some remote missionary lands by closer ties than those of trade. He who lives a few years longer will see Syrians and Egyptians, Hindoos, Chinamen, and Japanese coming in picturesque crowds to establish themselves in this all-digesting Democracy. We shall have an exodus from the scant work, low wages, famine, nakedness, and bad government of overpopulated Asia, as we are now having from comparatively happy Europe. Even now the outposts of this formidable immigration

have reached us. Boodh is worshiped by his hundreds in New York, and by his thousands in San Francisco. Nothing is wanting to swell the handful into a host, but such information respecting this country as is fast being learned, and such facilities for transportation as are fast being furnished. Is it in elbowed and starving human nature to decline a roomy Paradise? Such good government, such varieties of climate, such plentiful living, such expanse of virgin soil to be had for the asking, such opportunities for the ambitious, the gain-seeking, the ease-loving! When, before, were such prizes thrown open to all the world? In due time, a good part of the world will come for them. And the comers will be received. We have as great a thirst for mighty population as we have for mighty territories. We are quite willing to overtop with colossal growth every nation of ancient or modern times. The new States are anxious to have their resources developed, their political consequence increased. Landholders want to have their lands rise in value, and capitalists of every sort want cheap and abundant labor. No fear that the Oriental millions which will soon be knocking at our doors will be denied admittance! No fear that the inconsiderable few who

tremble for the morals of the country, and the success of its institutions, will be able to shoot bolt on the strangers! And so the nations will enter into our citizenship — will enter with all their degradation, with all their vileness, and with all their pestilent beliefs. Is it hard to see what will be the result? This center of universal sewerage, this continent cesspool, will reek up to heaven night and day, till all that is good and great among us perishes in the foul air — or Home Missions must cast in with might and main the disinfecting Gospel. Thus all that is done now to evangelize the leading heathen nations is so much anticipation of the work of the future home missionary. We purify California in the streets of Canton, and the year 1900 in the year 1875.

You fully believe that the future condition of the race depends gravely on the character assumed by the United States of America in its present forming state. You fully believe that the danger of this character proving unhappy is exceedingly great and pressing. You fully believe, that, to meet this danger, the Home Mission with its various societies for sending preachers, Bibles, &c., is the most reliable of all agencies, and that it should be loved and helped with a large heart and



a liberal hand. Nay, perhaps you are willing and desirous to say of it, that it is the most necessary of all the enterprises which the century has yet cradled, and that to it belong almost unlimited claims on persons, purses, and prayers. For oh, should our experiment of free institutions fail, when would men gain heart to make another? Oh, should the right arm of our fearful greatness be wielded by ungodliness or false religion, who could estimate the mischief done to humanity? And if, on the other hand, our venture should succeed, and our fabulous power and resources fill the hands of a God-fearing and high-principled people, then what a glorious lifting-up of the wide world! Lo, the long-sought world-fulcrum is found, and the Home Mission places the lever! So you would say, All honor and help to the mighty worker! So you would give it the portion of the first-born—the firstlings of fruits and flocks and children! Yet you will not serve it best by giving it *all* your interest. For its own sake, if for no other, you must divide your regards between it and that helpful sister which goes with the same Gospel to the lands of the stranger, and the far-away parts of the Vineyard. And very helpful that sister is. Honor and alms, then, to the Foreign

Mission also! Bid it God speed with new fervor. Commend it warmly to your patriotism, as you are wont to do to your philanthropy. Help it vigorously, as you would help your own sons and daughters. Lend glowing hand to plant the goodly Christian vine on strange soils, if you would have great reapings and shoutings of the harvest-home in the valleys of the Mississippi and Columbia.



**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XVIII.**

**ORGANIZATIONS FOR HELPING.**

## **XVIII. ORGANIZATIONS FOR HELPING.**

## ORGANIZATIONS FOR HELPING.

**T**O help evangelize foreign countries and our own, to aid in carrying all sorts of spiritual and temporal advantage to parishes and neighborhoods and families and individuals, various Societies have been organized. These give character to our time even more than do railroads and telegraphs and sciences. I should weary your patience and my own, were I to set down the names of a tithe of the legally incorporated organizations, which, for benevolent ends, and supported by benevolent contributions, spangle the broad face of Christendom. Local societies, national societies, international societies; societies for city and country, for home and abroad, for sea and land, for men and brutes, for bodies and souls; some to relieve hunger, nakedness, and disease; some to raise the general outward condition of the poor; some to instruct the ignorant; some to prevent, or reclaim from, particular vices; and some to radically reform the whole character of such men as can not or will not supply themselves with the means for doing it. Almost every Christian parish

has several of these societies. The larger towns and cities reckon them by scores. Such a city as London is the headquarters of a benevolent machinery so manifold, that it is no small undertaking even to read over the names of its various parts in the directory — names not a few of which are famous, and have a credit on 'Change quite as good as that of the Bank of England. And, putting together all the organizations which in Great Britain and our own country deserve to be called benevolent — including hospitals, asylums, retreats, homes, free libraries, reading-rooms, lodging-houses, ragged-schools, chapels, thousands of institutions of learning whose endowments began and grow ever from Christian charities — we are astonished at the great total. They annually collect and pay out in the Vineyard more than a hundred millions of dollars.

Organizations of such number, variety, and revenues are deserving of great attention. Let us look at a few leading facts respecting them.

*They are mostly the offspring of the present century.*

The benevolent spirit has been in the world ever since goodness has been in it, and that is now some six thousand years. Especially have benevolent feelings and efforts been put forth since the Chris-

tian era began. But, less than a century ago, the idea of *partnership* in good-doing took new hold of the public mind. It came upon men with the force of a great discovery. "*I have found it!*" shouted the young nineteenth century; and then began the great pioneer benevolent societies. From time to time, others were added, until now the land is covered with their shining array. With the exception of a few universities, the benevolent institutions with which Americans and Englishmen are now familiar are young children, scarcely more than infants. Their cheeks are yet without the first down: they have only just begun to walk.

*They are, however, having a vigorous growth.*

As to beginnings, most of them started with few friends and small incomes. The foreign mission enterprise in England began on the footing of seventeen pounds sterling. But the sapling, once fairly planted, made a new ring for itself almost every year. And this has been the law of all the leading benevolent organizations of the day. There have been small fluctuations — once in a while a year has narrowed upon its predecessor — but, in general, the years grow kinder and freer-handed as they fleetly come. In this way we have come



steadily up to our present revenue of millions, and our present broad area of benevolent work. Judging from the past, the exchequer of benevolence will be heavier next year than it is this. The river is widening and deepening as it goes toward the sea.

*They are none too many.*

They would bear increasing, rather. Not that it would be impossible to find two or more societies which might be profitably merged into one; but that, on the whole, there are quite as many natural divisions of the Vineyard as there are existing organizations to work them. It would be very undesirable to have one mammoth society to manage all branches of benevolent operations. The general Cause receives more on the basis of many independent applications; activity is more free and spirited; more light is diffused; the circle of our sympathies is enlarged. There are very many kinds of good which charity must assist in doing: let men club together for the doing of these in just as many circles as their idiosyncrasies of taste, training, habit of work, and locality may suggest. The freer they are to work in their own way, and with their own favorite associations, the more freely will they work. Let the river choose its own

course to the sea. The motto of *one thing at once* will not answer in the field of benevolence. The mutual dependencies of objects to be helped are such that they must be wrought at contemporaneously, if wrought at to the best advantage.

*They are being administered on the same general principles.*

They all work by *general rules*. There is no other way of respectably conducting extensive affairs. Exceptional cases have to be largely thrown out of account. Minor considerations and interests have often to be neglected in favor of what is best on the whole.

They are all conducted on *business principles*—as a matter of convenience, expedition, safety, economy, and natural justice. That is to say, their officers receive salaries, like other men—to support themselves and families upon, if they have not sufficient other means; and to give away at their best discretion, if they have. They use for their operations the ordinary channels of trade. They hire and buy and sell on account of their respective trusts, in the way honorable and conscientious men of business are accustomed to do. They keep accounts, and have them audited; they advertise

themselves and the advantages they have to offer, they make annual reports to their constituencies of what has been received and done, and give those constituencies an annual chance to make such changes in officers and methods as experience may suggest. Sensible men, on due reflection, see that this is the only feasible way of procedure; and so, as a matter of fact, all our benevolent organizations are large business-firms, doing business in business-ways; only the object of the business is not personal gain.

Another cardinal principle universally accepted by these organizations is, that men are best helped when they are helped to help *themselves*. Whether the relief to be given refer to the body or soul, let it be given in such a way as to stimulate, rather than suspend, the activity of the receiver. Throw people on their own resources as much as possible. If some are to be clothed and fed, let them, if possible, be put in the way of feeding and clothing themselves. If some are to be furnished with education, use foreign resources only so far as the domestic cannot be developed. This has come to be an axiom in modern benevolence; and, although it is not always acted on strictly, its reasonableness commends itself to the experience and common sense of all.

Further: they all aim to distribute the burden (the *privilege*) of their support *as widely as possible*. They go to the rich and the poor for contributions. They want farmers and merchants and sailors, and all the callings, represented among their supporters. It is desirable that interest in such matters should be localized in no particular class. So they invite contributions of all sizes, down to "the two mites that make a farthing;" and accept them from all sources, without inquiry as to motives and antecedents. Such an inquiry would, of course, be attended with immense embarrassments. They take whatever comes to them from the four winds — asking no questions for conscience' sake — and try to put it to the best use possible. They simply undertake, that, whatever mischief the money has been privy to in the past, it shall now go about its appropriate business of blessing men. If they learn that certain money was stolen, they decline it; but they cannot undertake to ferret out the secret history of every cent they receive. What a history has every well-worn penny!

*They have already accomplished vast good.*

Mistakes have been made. Incidental hurt has, no doubt, been done here and there. But no man

can be familiar with the detailed reports of the great benevolent societies, and see the wisdom and economy, and laborious energy, with which they expend their great incomes, without feeling that the true glory of this century is not in its telegraphs and railroads, and wondrous influx of inventions and discoveries, but in its great charitable enterprises for the relief, elevation, and purification of the race. What machinery has done for manufactures, the principle of partnership, combination, in benevolent societies, has done for the business of good-doing. Regular diffusion of appropriate information; the free offerings of the public taken and expended with system, with intelligence, with the skill and facility of trained agents giving all their attention to their trust—it has been *dynamical*. Such things have saved our country. Such things are saving mankind. The wants relieved, the afflictions mitigated, the ignorance enlightened, the vices averted or suppressed, the characters reformed—if all these results of our great organic charities for the last sixty years, with the comforts and hopes and secular and religious utilities of every name that have sprung from them, could take voice, and testify in their behalf, it would be a most transcendent eulogy.

But it is even more blessed to give than to receive. It has been an invaluable discipline to the humanity and goodness of the age. Its effects in moderating selfishness, in binding men to their fellows, in giving largeness and softness of heart, in furnishing one of the purest, most elevated, and most permanent of pleasures, cannot be told. They tell us of that great French Company which has channelled for ships the Isthmus of Suez — they tell us of those great associations, whose potent capital is fast covering all the dry land, and even the ocean-bottom, with highways for our messenger lightnings. It is well. Let them have their meed. But this I know that there are mightier and more useful associations than these — associations whose actual achievements are far brighter and richer in behalf of the race — associations whose absence would practically nullify the use, if it would not have prevented the existence, of all the chief modern improvements. The books are open. Let every one examine the bright record for himself.

Our organizations have done much, but,

*They will do still more.*

They are yet in their infancy. They have had to encounter the natural drawbacks of all new

enterprises. They have had to make themselves known; to create for themselves a public sentiment, conscience, and habit; to gain the facility and wisdom of experience. Up to the present their history has been one of progress. More and more freely flows from a better and better instructed public the stream of contributions. Obstructions have been cleared away. Momentum has been gained. The ear and conscience and heart of the public have been largely gained. And we have a right to believe that there is a future before these organizations of still greater activity and still more commanding influence. In comparison with what they will do, what they have done will not be remembered, nor come into mind. The present few millions put afloat for humanity and for God will gradually multiply themselves by two and by ten, and pour their blessings on sore and guilty hearts, over still wider and wider areas. Suffering and error and vice will find the battle growing hotter and hotter against them. The assailing forces will thicken, the smiting weapons will flash a brighter and swifter stroke, the ground will narrow and outpost after outpost be yielded, until at last the field is won, won for both God and man, and proceeds to blossom throughout its grim and

mighty wilderness. If any say that this is assertion, I answer that it is prophecy. If any say it is conjecture, I say that it is almost *experience*.

*They all have their root in Christianity and the Christian Church.*

Nine-tenths of them plainly so, the rest by lawful inference.

Such institutions are peculiar to Christian civilization. Greece and Rome, in their best days, did not have them. Mohammedan countries are as bare of them as their own deserts are of verdure. They flourish best in those Christian lands where the Bible is best known and followed. If you should examine these swarming benevolent institutions—these schools and colleges; these asylums for the blind, the insane, the orphans, the sick stranger; these trusts for popular education; these societies for vagrant children, for seamen, for temperance, for freedmen; in short, all the long list of our societies for helping men, body and soul, here and hereafter, up to those greatest and best of all which aim to reform the very inmost souls of men—I say, if you will take pains to examine, you will find that, almost without exception, they were started by Christian men, are administered by



Christian men, and are supported chiefly by Christian men. They received their original impulse from the Bible. It is the spirit of Christ that works in them. Christianity is the rich, mellow, strong soil that sustains and nourishes this heavy outgrowth of green. If there is any beauty and utility in this green forest of erect and thrifty charities; if it helps one to think better of his race, and inspires him with hope for the future of this wicked and suffering world; let him thank the religion of Jesus Christ. Here is the fair mother, and bountiful, of all our good, and promises of good — the ancient and best friend of the Vineyard.

**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XIX.**

**LAW OF CHRISTIAN GIVING.**

## **XIX. LAW OF CHRISTIAN GIVING.**

## THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN GIVING.

THERE may be an advantage in including, in one view, the whole Christian law in regard to that *giving* on which foreign and home missions, and almost all forms of Christian work, through organizations or otherwise, have come so largely to depend. For there is a *law* on this subject — though some seem to think that the whole matter of giving is commended simply to the good feelings and judgment of men ; and that one can give much or little or nothing, give when and where and how he pleases, without incurring penal responsibility.

The Christian law in regard to Christian giving embraces several particulars.

*All men, without exception, must give.*

“Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase.” “Give alms of such things as ye have.” “To do good and to communicate, forget not.” “Cast thy bread on the waters.” “Charge them that are rich in this world,

that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." "But rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." These rules cover all classes — the rich and the poor; those who have great, permanent incomes, and those who have nothing but what they get from day to day by their labor. Accordingly, one of the Scripture definitions of a good man is, "He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor." Accordingly, when the centurion Cornelius gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always, he was told by an angel that his prayers and his *alms* had come up for a memorial before God. Accordingly, Dorcas is praised as being full of good works and *alms-deeds* which she did; and the poor widow who cast her farthing into the treasury of the Lord got high eulogy and everlasting fame at the hands of Christ. Accordingly, when the Holy Ghost came down, and converted three thousand souls to Christ on the first Pentecost after His resurrection, none of them considered aught that he possessed, as his own, so far as it was needed by the infant church.

God is a great Giver: who would be like God must give. Christ was a great Giver: who would

be Christ-like, must give. So clear is the great need of alms in the world, so clear is man's need of the discipline of giving, that the universal reason of man, as speaking in all the religions and forms of society, has made almsgiving imperative. A Jew? You must give. A Mohammedan? You must give. A Pagan? You must give. A Christian? *You* must give. All around is deserving want to be relieved. The hungry, the naked, the sick, the ignorant, the criminal, the oppressed, the misled, wretched people who can not or who will not help themselves under their various distresses, are profusely found in all lands under heaven. Bibles must be supplied — also Sunday Schools, missionaries, Bethels, Asylums, sanctuaries — to those who are unable or indisposed to supply themselves. And experience shows that it does people quite as much good to give as it does the needy to receive. Here, indeed, lies the great reason of the law requiring giving from all men. God would have no difficulty in supplying silver and gold enough to meet all the temporal and spiritual needs of the world, without calling on men for gifts. But man needs the cultivation of giving. His heart would become hard and small and mean, and incorrigible in its selfish-

ness, without it. So the Word and Providence of God cry out to him evermore, *Give, Give, Give*—in order to save him, to enlarge him, to make him like God.

*Giving must be in proportion to means.*

Certainly a very reasonable rule. He who can give the most for the illimitable wants of the world is certainly bound to give the most. To whom much is given, from them much may reasonably be required: to whom comparatively little is given, the same owe comparatively little in the way of charity. So it is that the commandment reads, "*As God hath prospered you.*" The poor woman who cast her two mites into the Lord's treasury, considering her then circumstances, did liberally; but if her pecuniary circumstances ever improved to be a thousand times as good as they were at the time of that farthing-contribution, other things being equal, she must have enlarged her contribution a thousand times to deserve the same encomium. As matters stood, Cornelius was a noble example of charitableness, so that his alms went up before God as a memorial of him; but if, in process of time, that centurion became the commander of a legion, or a pro-consul, with

a vastly increased income, why, other things being equal, the old amount of alms would not have graced his altered circumstances, but would have scandalized them. What Dorcas gave, to her fame on earth and fame above, would have been ridiculous charity in a Christian Empress of Rome. A family begin life with nothing but their hands, and an annual subscription of twenty-five cents to send the Gospel to the heathen. Year after year they gather, until, at length, they are people of substance, worth their thousands; and yet perhaps they are subscribing the same pittance of a quarter in aid of Christian missions, with which they began thirty years ago. If they give enough now, they gave too much then: if they did not give too much then, they are giving too little now. The Christian rule is, "*According to means*," "*As God hath prospered*." What is praiseworthy for one man is shameful for another. The alms that were honorable for you once may be simply scandalous for you now.

*Giving must be liberal.*

It is not enough that we give in proportion to our means. We might give as much more than some others as our means are greater, and increase from time to time as our means increase, and



still the amount of our alms be of any imaginable smallness. So there is another section to the law of charity. We must give an amount that deserves to be called *liberal*. "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed." "Freely ye have received, freely give." "He who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Speaking of charity, the apostle Paul says to the Corinthians, "See that ye *abound* in this grace also."

Of course, there are different notions of what constitutes liberality. What would be liberal for one man would not be liberal for another. In any given case, it may be hard to say just where liberality ends, and the opposite quality begins. Still, for every man there *is* a measure of giving that truly deserves to be called liberal. There is a measure which he, taking an enlightened view of his circumstances and of the needs in the world around him, can conscientiously consider large and generous. This is what the Christian law of charity requires. If one is in doubt as to whether his present measure of giving deserves to be called bountiful, let him enlarge till all doubt ceases. Let him make sure of *enough*. He can increase

till his position is as clear as noonday. This is what he ought to do. Nobody justifies meanness of dealing toward God or man. Nobody justifies an equivocal position in the matter. Abstractly, every man approves the manly sentiment, "If I cannot get a living without being dishonest, or even without being mean, I will not have a living" — approves this sentiment, and all its plain inferences. Every one likes to be himself dealt with after a large and generous pattern; and every one should know that this is the way in which God and Christ and Religion have always dealt with him. Let him return dealings of the same sort.

But people sometimes claim that they are too poor to be liberal givers. Undoubtedly too poor to give as much as some others can and ought, but not too poor to be liberal. Such a case was never heard of. Every one, to the world's end, can give a good deal, *considering* his circumstances. Even the poor widow of the Gospel could do this; and she did it when she cast into the treasury her two mites which make a farthing. Her liberality, in Christ's view, was greater than that of any of the rich men who at her side cast in their lordly alms. "Verily I say to you, This poor widow hath cast in more than they all." And

there was another widow who was, if possible, more liberal still. With only a handful of meal in her barrel and a little oil in a cruse for her starving self and son, she shared it with a needy stranger. And God, as His way is, was so well pleased with her nobleness, that He would not suffer her meal or oil to waste under constant use till the day He sent rain on the earth. Too poor to be liberal! Say, rather, too poor to be otherwise than liberal. You cannot afford to be close-handed. It is the way to keep poor, to grow poorer still. Remember, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty."

But says some one, "Can you not be more definite. After all, there is an undesirable vagueness in the mere injunction to be liberal in charities: we would be glad if some definite proportion of income could be stated which we are bound to give to the Lord and to humanity." Well, your wishes can be met. The Christian law seems to demand that

*Giving must amount to at least one-tenth of the income.*

We have glimpses of the existence of such a rule

among the good men of the dim patriarchal times. Abraham, returning from his victory over the kings, devoted a tenth of his gains to the service of religion. Jacob, setting out in life, solemnly pledged to God a tenth of all the substance that God should give him in the whole course of his life. Ancient and widely separate heathen nations have regarded a tenth of their gains as sacred to their gods — evidently a tradition of the same primitive law under which Abraham and Jacob acted. Coming to Mosaic times, we find the law written out under all the formalities of positive statute for the Israelites. A tenth of all their incomes they must give away. So much all students of the Old Testament concede ; while some claim that the Hebrews were subjected to two or more tithings, and other subtractions of income, in behalf of religion and charity. We are sure a full tenth was required of them — probably they had to pay very much more. You see it was not a mere Israelitish rule : it existed before Israel. And if it were true that it could be found only in the Mosaic law, still all parts of that law stand so long as the *reasons* for them stand. Is there not as much reason why people now, of whatever nation, should bestow a tenth of their incomes for

religious and charitable uses as there ever was why the Hebrews should do it? I boldly say there is more reason. The calls for giving are more numerous, expansive, and urgent at the present day than they ever were under the Old Dispensation. The facilities for using alms efficiently for both the temporal relief and the eternal salvation of mankind are wonderfully increased. We are under greater motives to give in these Gospel times — under clearer instruction as to the worth of religion, and all its adjuncts, to guilty and perishing men. Now a tenth of income can be applied to relieve, enlighten, and redeem with a power impossible among the ancient Jews. If there ever was a good reason why the Jews should give away a tenth, there is a good reason why we should do it — a *better and stronger* reason. And it is probable that the primitive Christian church acted on similar views, and actually gave away a much greater proportion of their incomes than was given under the Old Testament Dispensation. Read how the Pentecostal converts gave. Read how Paul spoke of the Macedonian churches, 'that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality, so that to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they

were willing to give'—how he spoke to Corinthian Christians, who had no 'need of his writing to them touching the ministering to the saints,' and whose "forwardness of mind" in all such matters he knew and had sacredly boasted of!

"But where has this one-tenth rule been these long years? Very few seem aware of it: our fathers knew nothing of it: the few who have acted in the spirit of it have been stared at as doing works of supererogation. Where has the rule been these hundreds of years?" I answer, It has been where the law of Christian *missions* was a little more than half a century ago—where the law of the *Sabbath* was before the Puritans arose and dug it out of the misapprehensions and religious refuse of the dark ages. This law has remained buried a little longer than the other—that is all. There are fossil truths and laws as well as fossil vegetables and animals; and some lie deeper, and get disinterred later, than others.

This rule of the one-tenth does not apply to the rich alone. It embraces all classes. The very poorest. Who has not some income—ten cents, ten dollars, ten hundred dollars? It is just as easy taking the tenth cent as it is the tenth dollar for charitable purposes. It is quite as easy dividing a

mole-hill as it is a mountain. But you are a debtor. You owe, perhaps, more than you are worth. You feel that you must be just before you are generous. Nevertheless, first bring your tithe into God's storehouse. God is a *preferred* creditor. To set out on the principle of paying your dues to Him last is the way to keep always in debt. Pay Him, and He will be likely to help you pay others. No man in debt to his fellow-men can afford to remain in debt to God. But some persons get their support, wholly or partly, from what others give them — shall such persons tithe the very presents made them? Why not? It is their income — why not as proper to be assessed upon in behalf of God and humanity as income from their own houses and lands would be? After it is given them, it is theirs. To give away a portion of it will exercise their benevolence and trust, and restrain their covetousness, as much as anybody's. But what they have is itself charity! True; and all that any man has is nothing but charity — God's charity and alms to him. What hast thou that thou didst not receive as pure presents from heaven? "Of thine own we give thee," every giver is obliged to say to God.

But there is another law.

*Giving must be provided for once a week—on the Sabbath.*

We must tithe all our receipts, and we must take account of them for that purpose at regularly-recurring short intervals—once every few days; once a week, in fact; on that best of all days for religious reviews, for duties and preparations for duty, the Lord's Day. "On the first day of the week, let every man lay by him in store." Some have imagined, I hardly know why, that this direction was meant only for such persons as get their wages or incomes every Saturday night. "If your income reaches you quarterly or semi-annually or annually," say they, "the rule is met, if quarterly or semi-annually or annually, you set apart from it God's portion." I do not think so. The object of the rule seems to be to bring every man often face to face with his duty—to subject him to the discipline of a positive review and pre-arrangement of his affairs in the interests of benevolence and religion very *frequently*, as well as very regularly. Paul addresses all the Corinthian Christians. "Let *every one*," he says. It is altogether unlikely that all the disciples in wealthy and prosperous Corinth lived by weekly or daily proceeds of labor. They were, however, all liable, as men now are, to receipts



every week, from which God's portion needed to be set apart to meet the demands of charity. And what God wills of every man is, that he set himself down every Lord's Day, amid its sacred stillness and grateful recollections, and the promptings of a conscience quickened by the ordinances, and ask himself *whether*, during the last week, he has received any thing out of which God's charities, God's *tents*, are to be taken ; and, if so, then and there take them, either actually, or, at least, in a formal debt and credit account which he shall strictly keep. Let this be the day for posting, and, as far as possible, adjusting, his pecuniary as well as his other relations with Heaven. Plainly, this was what Paul required of every Corinthian, as well as of every Galatian believer. Can any one tell why the plan should be good for them, and not good for us ? Nearly all the Epistles are addressed, each to a particular church or person — one to the church in Rome, another to the church in Ephesus, another to Timothy, and so on — and we apply the various instructions and rules they contain to ourselves so far as the reason of them applies to ourselves. This is the great and obvious principle which binds them, and indeed almost all the Scriptures, on the consciences of us mod-

erns. And what seems evident is, that it will do every one of us just as much good, to face an honest charity-account every Lord's Day as it could have done any Corinthian or Galatian in the year of grace fifty-nine. Who thinks he would be harmed by such a course? Who doubts that his own character, and the cause of benevolence, would be greatly gainers by it? No one. Shall we not, then, most of us, adopt a new and more fruitful method of charity, and, after having settled that we will give, and give according to our means, and give liberally, and give at least one-tenth of our incomes, carry into effect these good resolutions by facing and adjusting our charity-account *every Lord's Day*.

I have a question to ask in view of these Christian Rules.

*Are you afraid that acting upon them will impoverish you?*

Never fear. Experience is against it. The promises of God are against it. "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again." "He that soweth bountifully shall reap

also bountifully." "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." So I say, Never fear being impoverished by giving to God according to God's rules. Men have often tried the system, and found it both safe and exceedingly profitable. "A man there was, though some did count him mad, the more he cast away the more he had"—and I run no risk in promising that you, my friend, shall be such another, if you faithfully obey these Christian laws for working in the Vineyard, in the way of giving.

**WORK IN THE VINEYARD.**

**XX.**

**WAGES FOR WORK.**

## **XX. WAGES FOR WORK.**

## WAGES FOR WORK.

THE first disciples of Christ held a position of great privilege. They stood in the midst of a great and teeming Vineyard — one that purpled and rejoiced, not only across a great breadth of Judæan hill and vale, but even far into the lands of the Gentile. It was a moral harvest-time. It was in their power to gather for themselves and others a great amount of religious blessings — a greater amount than had been within the reach of any former generation of reformers. Old delusions had grown feeble. A new revelation was spreading wonderful light. Miracles in troops were waking and shaking the minds of men with deep-toned, reverberating voices. Above all, the Dispensation of the Spirit was begun. Under these circumstances, the apostles were able to gather souls into the Kingdom in greater numbers than was possible in any previous age. And, too, they had unprecedented opportunities of getting for *themselves* all forms of moral excellence. No patriarchs nor prophets could have gone out and

filled their arms with such great clusters of blessing as they. To lead them to make the most of their opportunities ; to animate their efforts to give strength to the weak, light to the benighted, virtue to the depraved, salvation to the perishing, their Master said to them, "*He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.*"

From the time of the apostles to the present, there has not ceased to ripen about the church a like harvest. At no time have Christians been unable to enlarge greatly their fund of virtue ; at no time been unable to do much in the way of reclaiming backsliders, sanctifying the faithful, converting sinners, and glorifying God. But I think we may confidently ask, When was there ever *so* red and wide a field awaiting the Christian reaper as surrounds us at the present moment? Lift up your eyes and behold! Is it some narrow garden that you see — some petty New-England field, with its half-score of acres ; some Western prairie, stretching as far as the eye can see, with its crowded and blushing riches? Nay, but our ripe field is the whole world. Never was there such an extent of country open and waiting for the Gospel as now — never a time when that Gospel could be so cheaply, ably, and swiftly sent.

Bibles, and books to help the Bible, fall from our presses almost as fall the leaves of autumn. The men who offer themselves to carry and apply the truth are more numerous, and better equipped with the resources of a rich and varied culture and knowledge, than ever before. Science and art have reached that pass that they can send the truth and the teacher on their way as on the wings of the wind. When have there been such noble means of meeting the various forms of error and sin in the shape of cheap literature? When has there been so wondrous a brooding of the Holy Ghost over the land—over the ship, over the counting-room, over the shop, over the farm, over the college—over city and country, East and West? Once reapers reaped the moral field by little and little: now we can reap it as with machinery. Does one wish to reap souls in China or India? He can do it. Does he wish to reap them in the new settlements? He can do it. Does he wish to reap among his own neighbors? He can do that. In all these places, at the same moment, he can gather great clusters of glory for God, of righteousness and salvation for men. And on the right hand and on the left, before him and behind him, from Bible and Providence, from pros-



perity and adversity, he may gather for himself faith and love, penitence and patience, humility, zeal, disinterestedness — in a word, all that is good.

Now this is God's own harvest. All the moral and religious blessings which lie within our reach are planned by His mercy, wrought by His power, brought around us by His gracious activity. He cares more for them than for all other harvests put together. He is bent, therefore, to have the reaping done in its proper season, lest a blight should come, or a storm beat down the frail vines, or the overripe grapes drop and waste upon the ground. And yet it is not after His plan to do that timely reaping wholly by Himself. He wishes us to engage in doing it; and it was because He wished it that He said, *He that reapeth receiveth wages*. To look abroad on this most precious of harvests and admire it, to have the best wishes for its safe gathering, to ask one and another to bestir themselves to secure it, is all very well; but this does not content the proprietor. He wants us to go about the reaping *in person*. He wants the good wishes supplemented by the strong action. "Take *you* all your tools," says He, "and come. Before some mishap comes to this red vintage, let it be

gathered in." When a farmer sees his fields ripe, and his workmen insufficient, what does he? What but mount his horse, and go to such men as are able to work, and need work, and say to them, "Come and reap for me. The crop is suffering. I have not help enough. Come to-morrow, come to-day, come at once, if you can—the sooner the better—and stay through the harvest." He wants to get as many as possible into his suffering fields. And if he sees a stranger walking by, who looks as if he might find it convenient to be employed, he promptly calls out to him, "Ho, there! Do you want work? If so, I will furnish you with it." To compare great with small, Divine with human—God is just another such proprietor. His harvest is great, and His laborers too few. The fields are suffering for want of reaping. Every day, virtues, salvations, Heavens, are dropping and perishing. Every day, souls are becoming shrunk and blasted, and unfit for the heavenly garner. A dreadful waste of moral and religious blessings, of God's best 'glory and man's best welfare, is constantly going on in all parts of the world. See you to it, then, that God is on the lookout for reapers—just such persons as you are, persons able to work and needing work, persons able to

promote the cause of Christ in the world, and needing to do it for their own soul's sake, if for no other reason. He wishes, He asks, He is urgent, that you come to the help of His Vineyard without delay. Let him who can gather but few clusters, gather those few — him who can gather his many, gather those many. In so large a field, there is place for all degrees of strength and skill; and the poorest workman that ever bared his arms to labor can manage to secure a few grapes, at least, for the storehouse; can manage to prevent some sin, to encourage some holiness, to save some souls. There is work enough for every individual of us, and a loud call to it out of Heaven. Who does not hear it — pleading for the suffering harvest in Asia, Africa, Europe, America?

But suppose we consent to become reapers — what then? I answer, "*Sure wages.*" It is certain that whoever of us will work for God will not work for nothing. For hear what He says: "He that reapeth receiveth wages." The slave works his life through, and gets nothing in return — save what is necessary to keep him in a working condition. Many a man who freely rents his labor to another finds, at the end of weeks or months, that he will not be able to get a farthing from his dis-

honest employer. Indeed, no man who hires himself out to reap a secular harvest can be perfectly sure that something will not step in between him and his compensation, and cut him off from every fraction of it. If the employer does not prove dishonest, he may prove a bad manager, a careless procrastinator, a hopeless bankrupt; and the poor man never see a penny of the money for which he has borne the burden and heat of the day. Let the Christian rejoice that there is at least one sort of harvesting in which he can engage with the certainty of not working for nothing; one Great Employer who will, without fail, pay His reapers for their work. Read the promise again: "*He that reapeth receiveth wages.*" Here is one, who, beyond a doubt, will be as good as His word. Here is one who will never forget to pay, nor lose the means of paying. Whoever becomes insolvent, however widespread and terrible the crises and crashes among the oldest and soundest houses, of this we are sure, that God will for ever remain able to meet all His engagements, and that no man who enters His service will find himself at last an unpaid laborer. No risks in taking employment from God. As surely as we get praise and influence for Christ among men, so surely shall we get paid for it. As surely

as we improve and save souls anywhere in the Vineyard, so surely we shall in nowise lose our reward. Even our *efforts* to do good, though they should fail of success, will not fail of requital.

Let us fasten in our minds another fact. The reward is not only sure, but *proportional to the labor expended*. The more clusters we reap, the more diligent we are in trying to reap, the more wages we shall get. The principle is evidently a reasonable one; but it is one on which human employers are, to a great extent, unable to act. The farmer gives his so much per day for a man; and if one workman does a little more, and another a little less, than the average, still they all receive alike at the end of the day. The difference in respect to amount accomplished by the different laborers may be very considerable, and yet there will be no recognition of this difference in the prices paid. Moreover, should some one come into that harvest-field, and volunteer his fifteen minutes of reaping, he would carry away with him no price whatever, and no recognized title to one. But, with God for an employer, and religious harvesting for the work, such a volunteer would fare very differently. His quarter of an hour of strokes would be acknowledged by a draft on Heaven's

Treasury. Nay, a single moment of labor shall not miss its compensation. God is so great, that He can take account of the smallest service — so good, that He will do it. The more we do, the more we shall obtain. We shall reap wages according as we reap grapes. Say you are now doing a certain amount for the cause of Christ and the salvation of men. Increase that amount by one more hour of labor, by one more dollar of alms, by one more prayer. Are you no richer than before? Have you no more to look forward to, when, at the close of your day, you will be called to receive your wages? That extra toil, extra self-denial, extra praying breath, however trifling it may be in degree, has gone up to Heaven with open palm, and will one day return, bringing to you a piece of shining gold. It is sure to do it, incredulous though many be. "What, shall the very smallest things we do for Christ and religion — things which even the microscopic eyes of our own self-partiality cannot make seem of any particular account — shall *such* things have their sure wages?" Yes, be sure of it. Nothing, absolutely nothing, done for Christ shall go overlooked; and the man of us who chooses to multiply his neighbor's reaping by ten, and make the product his own, shall

find himself at last reaping tenfold that neighbor's reward.

Contracts with governments are proverbially profitable. Commonly, men do not expect to be paid for their labor by Congress or Parliament on the same narrow scale they would be by a private citizen. It is presumed that the wages will bespeak the dignity and wealth of the State as well as the value of the service rendered. The artist who puts up his statue in the Capitol carries home from the public treasury three times the sum he would have received from any private patron; and the builder of that Capitol realizes for his work according to the revenues of the country rather than according to the market-value of his materials and his labor. Whether such a principle of compensation is the proper one for human governments, let political economists decide; but this I know, that it is the principle on which the Divine Government deals. The wages it gives are always on the scale of its own astonishing greatness. Should you conclude to take employment under God, and reap in His Vineyard, you shall not only be sure of payment, and of payment proportional to what you do, but also of payment that shall tell you how great God is. You shall "*gather fruit*

*unto life eternal.*" Heavenly glory shall pay your earthly striving. Crowns of kings shall pay the work of servants. Harps of gold shall replace in your hands the keen knives. Every cluster you cut down for God shall finally turn into a scepter in your hands. Every drop of sweat your foreheads gather at this harvesting shall turn into a priceless jewel. Every red grape saved shall turn into a tree of life to regale you with its fruit for ever. Every lift of your hands to the loaded vines shall let in celestial light and glory on your destiny, and set unfading rainbows around it. It will not be deserved, oh, no! but your Heaven shall brighten and flash and rejoice for ever, for every help you give, however small, to the cause of truth and righteousness among men. All your rewards shall bespeak the majesty of the Government you serve. Your wages shall be adjusted to the enormous revenues of your Employer rather than to the scantiness of your own merit.

I come to you with an exhortation. It is, that you deeply interest yourselves in those sure, proportional, and prodigious wages which God gives His harvesters. You have seen how purple with spiritual blessings is the Vineyard around you, even to the world's end; how much usefulness and virtue



and salvation you can gather for your fellow-men, far and near. Peace, gentleness, patience, love, trust, reverence—you can reap them for yourselves on the right hand and on the left: on the right hand and on the left, around the sphered world, you can, through one agency and another, do much to sanctify and save guilty and perishing men. Hark! God calls you to become reapers. A great, loud, urgent call it is—such a call as you should never need to have repeated—a call to begin at once, and to begin strongly. How gladly angels would answer to it! How swiftly their wings would quiver and dart upon the air toward us, could the same invitation be addressed to them! Though the number is all too small, yet some men can be descried, if you carefully look around, who, amid harvest heats, are doing harvest work; who, with Bible and exhortation and prayer and contribution, are endeavoring to secure to men the great blessings of the Gospel which are ripening all around them. Oh, look at these reaping men, and see them heaping up eternal glory for themselves day by day! See how, almost hour by hour, their store of crowns and gems and harps and scepters grows higher and brighter! Friends, have you no holy emulation of these men? Will you not furnish

and glorify *your* palaces in heaven as these busy reapers are furnishing and glorifying theirs? Consider what other labor will pay as well as this sacred harvesting. Where will you find the work whose rewards are so sure and great? What other employer will deal by you after such large-handed and princely fashion? Though you should hire out your services to the most prodigal government that ever counted its revenues by hundreds of millions, it would be a wretched contract by the side of that which you have the opportunity of making with the Lord of the harvest. But, mark you, that the time of this great opportunity is short. You cannot always reap and gather fruit unto life eternal. A few days more, and the Vineyard will be shut against you, at least, as a theater for wages-getting. Now you can reap, and, in reaping, enrich yourselves for evermore. But the time of this privilege is contracting, contracting, ever contracting. Very soon it will all be gone. Perhaps you have not improved the past well—will you let the scant future go unimproved too? Will you not make the most of what remains? Say that, with God's help, you will, from this moment, enter His ripe fields, and stay there, and work there, and work strongly there, till you die. Say that you will be

consistent; for should some business-opening present itself, where the profits are sure, and proportional to the pains, and even gigantic, no doubt you would step into it with eagerness. Indeed, a good deal less than certain and mighty gains would answer to set you into enthusiastic motion. It would be enough to enlist you heartily in the enterprise to see a sound *probability* of its proving largely gainful. But here you have the most unqualified certainty and unimaginable vastness; and, though the heavenly profit cannot be counted in dollars and cents, it is none the less profit for that. Will you be consistent, and become God's zealous reaper — go *at once* into the Vineyard, and, by and by, take payment on the grand scale of the Divine Government?

What, ho ! ye many idle men,  
In market-place still sitting,  
Though sun is up, and working-hours  
So fast away are flitting :  
Is there no honest work to-day,  
No master fair to hire you,  
That ye sit here with loins ungirt,  
And hands that hang beside you ?

Behold a Vineyard nigh and wide :  
Its gates are widely open ;

And from within come loudly forth  
These words by Master spoken :  
“ Up, all ye many idle men,  
Into my broad field come ye,  
And work with me till sun go down —  
Then rest in Heaven with me.”

Now list ye to these goodly words  
That from the Lord come sounding,  
And set to work like faithful men,  
In all His field surrounding :  
Think ye what Master great ye have  
To watch and work beside you ;  
Think of the wage of endless life  
Which He will soon provide you !

Nor man can want, nor world can give,  
A field so worth your tilling :  
Strange that to till such field as this  
All men should not be willing !  
If I were ye, no earthly thing  
Without this field should keep me ;  
And, once within, no earthly power  
Without this field should sweep me.

See through the gates some men ye know  
For God sublimely toiling ;  
They plow and plant, they till and reap,  
Yet whitest hands not soiling.  
Now rise, ye drones, and join these men,

Be every whit abreast them :  
What matters work to weary men  
If Heaven at last shall rest them ?

Will ye sit here the livelong day,  
While God for work is calling,  
And crowns to pay for faithful work  
Like showers of stars are falling ?  
What will ye do when day is done,  
If ye no work can show Him,  
In all His wide and weedy field,  
For all the work ye owe Him ?

What will ye do when day is done,  
If ye no wage have taken,  
And find that they who work forsake  
Must be of God forsaken ?  
Know workless men are worthless men —  
Let him who will deny it —  
And chaff like wind shall fly away  
When God with fan shall ply it.

Then up, ye many idle men ;  
Spare not nor time nor sinew ;  
Be not ye as the flying chaff  
When God His wheat shall winnow.  
The hours of work are wasting fast ;  
Soon day to night shall darken —  
Happy the men in market-place  
Who to this call shall hearken !



















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